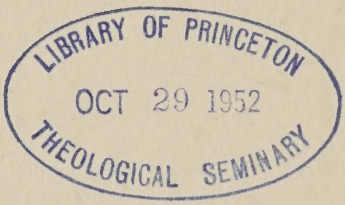
A PARTISAN HISTORY OF JUDAISM



BM 157 .B47 1951
Berger, Elmer, 1908-
A partisan history of
Judaism

A PARTISAN HISTORY OF JUDAISM

"Judaism is to do justice and to have mercy and to walk humbly with God; all the rest is commentary."

By the same Author

THE JEWISH DILEMMA

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
OCT 29 1952
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A Partisan History of JUDAISM

by ELMER BERGER

Executive Director
The American Council for Judaism

Foreword by PAUL HUTCHINSON
Editor, The Christian Century

THE DEVIN-ADAIR COMPANY
New York: 1951

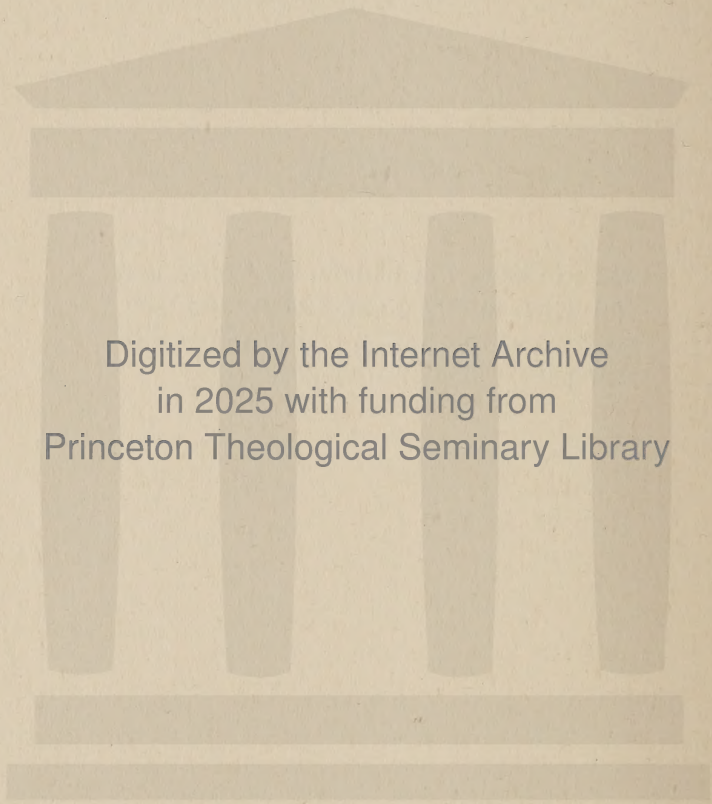
Copyright 1951 by ELMER BERGER

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be quoted, except for brief passages in reviews, without written permission from the publisher.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO RUTH

who will know why without my telling her, and what, in any event, I could not adequately put into words, and to whom this represents a long overdue promise.


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Princeton Theological Seminary Library

https://archive.org/details/partisanhistoryo00berg

CONTENTS

Foreword by Paul Hutchinson		ix
Preface		1
I	Where Did Jews and Judaism Come From?	7
II	How Did Jews Come to Believe in One God?	31
III	Meet the Rebels Who Changed the World	54
IV	What Happened to Judaism in the Ghetto?	79
V	The Dilemma of Nationality Versus Religion	98
VI	Judaism for Americans of Jewish Faith	120

FOREWORD

America knows no more formidable domestic issue than that of the melting pot. Will the melting pot melt? Will it take all of us who have come from so many differing cultures and fuse us into a new entity which is more than a composite of old nationalities and tribes—the *American* people? Our Founding Fathers, at the republic's birth, held a sublime faith that the social and political institutions of this new nation in a new world were so evidently superior to those in any other land that the doors need only be opened and from then on the process of assimilation would proceed swiftly and automatically. This confidence in the melting pot finds almost unquestioned expression in our literature all the way from Tom Paine to the lines by Emma Lazarus which are blazoned on the Statue of Liberty.

Experience, however, challenged the assumptions of our fathers. The melting pot did not always melt. America began to be aware of "minorities," cut off from the main body of American life as were the minorities in many European states. Sometimes, as in the case of the Indians and the Negroes, the responsibility rested on the resisting majority. Sometimes, as in the case of the Know-Nothing agitations of the eighteen fifties (later repeated under other slogans), the tension revealed the difficulty of acclimatizing an authoritative and hierarchical religion in a democratic and equalitarian society.

Sometimes, as in the case of the outcry against Eastern European immigration which led to the end of unrestricted entrance, the influence of the economic factor, producing a determination to guard against swamping the labor market, was most marked.

For one reason or another, entrance into the American republic has thus become severely limited, while the demand for assimilation of such as do manage to pass the closely guarded gates has grown more and more insistent. Theodore Roosevelt left the scornful phrase "hyphenated Americans" as a permanent deposit in our national lexicon. One effect which the crisis of this present era of world wars has had on us has been to press for a solidarity, even a uniformity, of thought and behavior which has gone beyond what many of us believe to be reasonable limits. (Fortunately, the Supreme Court has usually lined up with the dissenters.) Only after titanic efforts were the gates opened a trifle after the Hitler madness and the Communist fury swept Europe, to permit a handful of displaced persons to slip through. Emma Lazarus' welcome sounds like mockery in these days when the United States Senate gets its orders on matters of this kind from the Honorable Patrick McCarran.

Behind all the changes in national policy, the arbitrary rulings of immigration officials, and the occasional displays of parochial-mindedness by legislative bodies, there has been, however, one intention common to the minds of the American people. They have expected their melting pot to melt. They have demanded that conditions shall be maintained under which it can melt. And in the face of a world situation which they may only dimly comprehend but which they unitedly regard as menacing, they are increasingly insistent that this proc-

ess of amalgamation and fusing shall be both rapid and thorough. The problems of assimilation are not all solved by any means. But the demand for assimilation is more insistent than ever. It is even, under the pressure of a Democratic administration for civil rights legislation, beginning to crack the Solid South.

In the light of this historical development – plain enough, whether or not one regards it as justified or wise – I find it tragic to see so many of our Jewish citizens electing for an attempted separate existence within our American society. While they insist that the idea of a divided allegiance is as repugnant to them as to any of their neighbors, they nevertheless denounce the principle of cultural amalgamation, they proclaim that the focus of their emotional and spiritual longing is elsewhere, and they show themselves ready in the discharge of their duties as American citizens to subordinate all other considerations to the interests of a foreign nation. The very word "assimilation" has become a reproach on their lips. They insist that the melting pot must not be allowed to melt.

This is a recent development. It was not so in the colonies. The Jews who came to the Atlantic settlements, north and south, became as fully integrated in the colonial communities as the discriminatory laws of that period permitted. By their contributions to the common effort they helped mightily to create the climate in which that discriminatory legislation was first relaxed and ultimately repealed. At the period of the Revolution, the extent to which the Jewish population had become an integral part of the war for liberty and then of the struggle to plant the young republic on firm foundations – this is a matter of record and of pride, something celebrated today by monuments and historical markers. All down

through the 19th century the direction of development in American Jewry was toward ever more sweatshops, which trapped so much of the immigration in the turn-of-the-century decades, but the dream of those who sweated in them was to become "Americanized" with all possible speed. The extent to which that dream was realized could scarcely be comprehended in other lands, other cultures. Dr. Berger shows, in this book, that this drive toward absorption in the American society was what gave power to the ministry of that great man, Isaac Mayer Wise. Here was the essential genius of Reform Judaism.

But today, when the spokesmen of a considerable portion of American Jewry set out to define the relation of these Americans to their fellows and to the steadily evolving American culture, they straightway lose themselves in a verbal cloud of ambiguities. I think I have read most of the statements in which Zionist leaders, both in this country and in Palestine, as well as at Zionist conventions, have tried to explain this relationship. I have found these of two sorts. Either they have spoken of American Jews as exiles whose ultimate national home will be found in Israel (Rabbi Berger quotes some of these plain statements, but they are becoming infrequent as the resentment of other Americans becomes plain) or they have resorted to a species of double-talk which I have never been able to understand and which I believe has been employed deliberately to prevent understanding. And this double-talk is producing a dangerous state of double-thought — yes, what today's jargon calls schizophrenia — especially among unfortunate youngsters who are being urged to believe that they are rejected and outcasts in this American society

and that their ambitions can find fulfilment only under another flag.

When this effort to revive the separateness of the Jew from all other elements in American life is challenged, appeal is always taken to what is claimed to be the American principle of "cultural pluralism." Here again is a phrase which needs a great deal more stringent examination than has so far been given it. If it assumes that America is to go on throughout its history with its population split apart in life and parochial aims at any cost, then I do not believe that the American people ever have or will approve any such principle. They could not, and expect their nation long to survive. The only basis on which it seems to me that cultural pluralism can be accepted even for a moment is the basis on which Lincoln, in the speech which catapulted him to national leadership, said slavery might be accepted in the American "house divided" — namely, "the public mind must rest in the belief that [it was] in the course of ultimate extinction."

This claim of the right of American Jews to refuse amalgamation is building toward a crisis which may have lamentable consequences. Already it is becoming clear that every time Israel gets in a jam — and many of its policies, especially with regard to economics and immigration, seem almost designed to produce jams — American Jews will be expected to high-pressure the United States government to step in and straighten matters out. Zionist leaders have not hesitated to carry this sort of thing to the extremes of practical political blackmail. This can continue for a little while because of our peculiar electoral system, and the relation of the alleged "Jewish vote" in New York to the 47 electoral votes cast by that pivotal state.

But New York is not the United States, and if this sort of strong-arm intervention in behalf of a foreign state keeps up, look out for an explosion. The Lodge Amendment, already approved by one house of Congress, is a cloud on the horizon considerably larger than a man's hand.

Fortunately, there are Jewish scholars and one outstanding Jewish organization in America that believe the effort to herd American Jewry into a separate and transitional existence, living always with one foot outside the national door, rests on a misreading of Jewish history and a misinterpretation of the nature of Judaism. Judah Magnes, first chancellor of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, who died of a broken heart, was one such scholar. William H. Fineshriber is another. So are Morris S. Lazaron and Irving F. Reichert and Solomon Zeitlin. The organization is, of course, the American Council for Judaism. The men whom I have named — and others who hold the same position — and the organization have been subjected to frantic misrepresentation and abuse. They have been charged with everything from apostasy to treason. Perhaps this is not to be wondered at in a time when the very word "assimilation" is hissed rather than spoken. (One could almost write a history of these times out of a study of the fate of words. Consider, for example, the scorn with which a Communist utters the word "liberal." Very similar is the Zionist pronunciation of "assimilationist.") Despite this abuse, however, these men and this organization have gone steadfastly ahead, standing for what they believe to be the eternal spiritual values in Judaism, and against a nationalistic chauvinism which would set American Jewry on a road that could lead to a repetition of the post-Exilic tragedy.

In the lectures which formed the basis of this book, Dr.

Berger was trying to make clear to a New York college audience the position of this group. He showed that it has nothing against Zionist humanitarianism. It has nothing against Zionist cultural revival. As I read him, he seems to have nothing against a new Zionist state in Palestine provided this is conceived as a refuge for those Jews who actually have been rejected and ejected from other lands. But he refuses to agree that this new nationalism must include, either physically or psychically, all Jews, all adherents of Judaism everywhere. He insists that the Jew in America, as in most of the countries of the democratic West, is not living in exile. So far as American Jews are concerned, he rejects as pernicious nonsense the talk which he quotes from Zionist leaders about "the gathering of the exiles."

Rabbi Berger is, of course, engaged in polemical writing—it seems to me polemics of a high order. He deals with ideas, not personalities. And his book must be met on those terms if it is to be effectively disputed. If his history is wrong, if the inferences he has drawn from that history are unsound, this must be shown by producing a more convincing interpretation of a more scholarly history. Efforts to deal with an argument of this kind by resorting to personal attacks or wild and unsubstantiated generalities convince nobody capable of comprehending a rational discussion. Such a descent into the puerile or irrelevant exposes the weakness of the position thus defended.

I am honored by the invitation to contribute this foreword to Dr. Berger's book. In so doing, I do not mean to indicate that I agree with everything he has written. When, for instance, he attempts to explain the comparatively swift rise of Christianity to power in the Roman Empire, I think he is a

bit too sketchy and too sweeping about the part played by Paul's knowledge of the mystery cults. After all, there were the so-called Johannine writings, Philo, and neo-Platonism, as well as a number of other potent elements, which cannot be left wholly out of account. The Arian heretics gave the Athanasian orthodox a stern run for their money. But these are trifles in relation to Dr. Berger's total argument.

I have gladly written this foreword because it seems to me that Dr. Berger presents a historical theory which has intellectual integrity. Is is true? It deserves examination and a verdict on grounds of solid scholarship. If it is true, this has immense importance for all Jews in countries which derive their institutions from the American, the French, and the Latin-American revolutions. And those who long for an America that will continue to be a living source of enlightenment, freedom, and justice will find in this conception of the relation of Judaism to the unifying and growing American culture, another reason to cling to hope in this time of gathering gloom.

PAUL HUTCHINSON

A PARTISAN HISTORY OF JUDAISM

PREFACE

"Would That Mine Adversary Had Written a Book" (JOB XXXI:35).

THE MATERIAL in this book appeared originally as a series of informal lectures which I had the privilege of delivering to a group of members of the American Council for Judaism in New York. In response to numerous requests, the lectures were published. The formulation of the material for book form followed a number of requests and suggestions made by people who had seen the published lectures.

This history accounts, to some extent, for the informal character of much of the content of the book. For I was importuned not to do a great deal of rearranging or editing or to introduce too much documentation or technical material into what had, apparently, been a fairly acceptable and intelligible presentation. The organization of the material, therefore, follows the informality of the lectures rather than any outline with which one might set out to begin a book.

A colleague of mine in the Reform rabbinate of the United States who saw the material in the form of the published lectures wrote, somewhat in a choleric vein, "What then do you think will be the effect of reading these lectures—say on an intelligent and uninformed Jewish college student? Will he be inspired with love and enthusiasm for his religion, a desire to live by it and transmit it to his children, or will his reading stir in him contempt for everything Jewish?"

I can answer only on the basis of the limited experience I have had with the lectures, both in published form and upon the audience which first heard them. The response was extremely gratifying. For the first time, many told me, they had heard a natural, understandable, and intellectually acceptable explanation of the development of the religion which others seemed to expect them to accept by edict and authority.

The humble beginnings of Judaism did not stir contempt in them for everything Jewish. On the contrary, the living, tortuous history of growth and development; the trials and errors, the expected combinations and alterations of fallacies and truths were part of a human process they could understand and which aroused sympathy in them. I do not know that it moved any of them to the heights of religious ecstasy. But it stimulated their curiosity where before, Judaism, as it had been handed to them full-blown and ready-made, had left them more or less indifferent.

In the story, as it is presented here, they saw a historic process not yet completed and of which they could become a part, to change and alter, to rebel and reconstruct as others had done so often before them.

Not all Jews will be excited by this kind of Judaism. There are Jews as there are those of every creed who find in themselves an empty space and who wait patiently for "the faith of their fathers" to fill the void. This book has no quarrel with them. For them there are other kinds of Judaism, different from the interpretation presented here which, I hope, challenges to be creators as well as believers.

There are also those who see Judaism as "the religion of the Jewish people." This book will not please them, either. For it indicates, unmistakably, that the origins of Judaism were

not in "the Jewish people" and that the best and finest of Judaism today transcends "the Jewish people."

The book, therefore, as Dr. Hutchinson so clearly points out, is largely in the field of polemics. I hope Dr. Hutchinson made that observation and wrote it without regret or apology. For polemics are a valuable and, in fact, an indispensable part of our free way of life. I welcome the characterization and hope it will not scare away any who might otherwise be inclined to read.

I have often thought that a revival of religious polemics might be a good thing for our spiritually weary and confused age. We might, perhaps, be able to engage in it with something less than the fanaticism and ulterior purposes which frequently motivated the great polemics of the Middle Ages. While, as any reader of this book will see, I am a firm believer in those truths which I think are common to all of the great faiths of mankind, I have sometimes been inclined to believe also that in simply saying that all of these faiths possess these common truths, we have achieved a kind of indifference. We are inclined to take the symbol of brotherhood and the obvious increase in religious understanding as a substitute for the faiths themselves.

This, if it is so, is no test of religious fraternalism. This is simply diminishing interest in religion. There is nothing wrong in religious partisanship; in believing quite passionately that one religion or one interpretation of a great religion is the best possible faith for you, recognizing, at the same time, that someone else may have a different preference.

I am such a partisan in Judaism. I have no patience with "unity" in Judaism or among Jews. I do not believe there is any such thing as a "Jewish people" – not even in the State of

Israel, as yet, at this writing; though someday such an entity may exist there.

I like the heterodox, the rebels, the challengers of authority who, time and again, put the clerics in their place and who, for me, made Judaism something in which I can believe rather than something to which I was born.

To have had the privilege or the effrontery to put all this down in the terrifying irrevocability of a book would not have been possible without a great deal of help and encouragement.

I owe a deep sense of gratitude to my friends and associates in the American Council for Judaism. More than any other Americans of Jewish faith, they symbolize, for me, the challenge to authoritarianism and uniformity which appeals to me in Judaism as I understand it. Their support and encouragement has given me that inspiration that seldom comes to one caught up in organizational life. I thank them for it and hope that in these pages they will find something of the historical antecedents of their present courageous position and something of hope for the future of their work as they see how often, in Judaism, the "heresy" of today is only a forgotten truth of yesterday and becomes the norm for tomorrow.

The membership of the Council will join me in special gratitude to Lessing J. Rosenwald. In a fairly wide experience in a career of personal service, I have never met a nobler or a more humble man. Calm, dispassionate, peaceful himself, he has never turned from principles simply because conflict might be involved. I take this opportunity to express my profoundest personal admiration and my gratitude for having been privileged to be associated with him for so long in this work.

My sincerest appreciation also to Dr. Paul Hutchinson

of *The Christian Century* for contributing his Foreword. Dr. Hutchinson represents an important group of genuinely liberal Americans who have found Zionism and "Jewish" nationalism unacceptable. "Jewish" nationalists, refusing to debate the issues on their merits, have attempted to discredit the Dr. Hutchinsons. Their efforts will not succeed. For those of us who are Jews and who also reject Zionism and "Jewish" nationalism, it is good to know that Dr. Hutchinson knows they will not succeed. For, in the final analysis, the integration of the American people, without the loss by any of them of their religious convictions, depends upon the liberals of our nation who separate church from state and accept the individual of any faith as an individual — not as a member of a separatist and segregated group.

Another liberal American Christian who stands in this same tradition is Dr. Millar Burrows of Yale University. To him I am indebted for numerous technical suggestions and corrections which he patiently offered me after reading the material in its original lecture form. In fairness to Dr. Burrows I should add that while I used most of his suggestions, I did not accept all of them. The technical errors therefore, if any, are mine — not his.

I express my gratitude also to Dr. Morris S. Lazaron and Dr. William H. Fineshriber, both of whom read the original lectures and offered helpful suggestions when it became clear that the material might be put into book form.

I wish to thank Messrs. Harper & Brothers for permission to quote material from *Trial and Error* by Chaim Weizmann, and Schocken Books, Inc., for permission to quote material from *The Zionist Idea* by Joseph Heller.

Nothing further need be added here, except to say that "my

adversaries" who favor a more nationalized pattern of life and religion for Jews will probably be delighted that I have written this book. It will be a new target for them, although in the past they have not waited to say, with Job,

"Would that mine adversary had written a book."

I will welcome the polemics. With Dr. Hutchinson, I hope they will be on a high level. Out of it may come no greater agreement or "unity." But if a better understanding of differences and the reasons for them is created; if here and there someone's curiosity is teased to pursue further this eternal conflict in Judaism, this book will serve its purpose.

July 1951 ELMER BERGER

I

WHERE DID JEWS AND JUDAISM COME FROM?

THE IDEA has long persisted that Jews have always been some kind of unit – nationally, racially, or however proponents of Jewish segregation choose to describe them at any particular time and for any particular purpose.

This idea is not true! But the reasons for the persistence of the myth are complex and varied.

In the historic period just preceding the democratic revolutions, societies were organized in castes and other forms of segregation based upon creed and race, among other classifications. Jews usually were considered such a caste, and vestiges of this opinion of uniformity among Jews persist in those areas of our society where some of the dank air of medievalism has withstood the cleansing atmosphere of democracy. This is one reason why the myth of "Jewish unity" persists.

Another reason why the myth persists is that there are protagonists for a continuation of "Jewish unity" among both Jews and people who are not Jews. It is easier to talk of anything in generalizations than in specifics. It is particularly easy to do this about people, whom we all frequently and conveniently collectivize in order to be able to talk about them at all in units of more than one.

And there is nothing particularly damaging about this practice, provided we allow for important differences; if we are

always careful to make the valid reservations to our generalizations.

In the particular generalization about "Jewish uniformity," the valid reservations of a long history of divisiveness, dissent, and independent thinking are all too frequently omitted. The general tenor of comments about Jews is the flat assertion that "Jews are" this or that or the other thing.

The facts in the history of Jews and Judaism clearly demonstrate that any generalizations are as inadequate as they are about any other people — perhaps even more so.

Actually, as I hope to show, such unity is not supportable by the history of either Jews or Judaism. It was grafted onto history by partisans for the idea. This was as true in Biblical times as it is today.

Judaism evolved from a primitive tribalism to as noble a spiritual and universal vision as man has ever attained. This fact attests, even without detailed proof, to the truth that "unity" and segregation may have had their partisans but that there must also have been undiscourageable partisans of another kind throughout the long history of Jews and Judaism.

For change and evolution rarely, if ever, are born from uniformity. Uniformity is imposed, as our modern world knows, in order to suffocate rather than encourage growth. That the history of Judaism reveals such growth is proof of disunity, of individualism, of liberalism, and of respect for these things in whatever degree necessary; to have accepted their achievements and grafted them into the organism of Judaism itself.

Both traditions and both viewpoints existed side by side. There has been constant struggle between them. Sometimes the viewpoint of universalism and assimilation of all but re-

ligious identity prevailed. Sometimes the segregation was initiated by separatist Jews. Sometimes it was enforced by segregation-minded people who were not Jews. Sometimes both groups or a combination of circumstances created by segregationalists of both kinds established the pattern.

But the important fact remains that always, among both Jews and those of other faiths, there were those who respected the individual integrity of people of Jewish faith and the transcending, universal values of Judaism.

This knowledge may be increasingly important in a world facing new tensions and crises. For the way of life which we Americans are struggling to preserve for ourselves and extend to others, holds as an important part that it is the individual that is important; that each is endowed with certain inalienable rights, regardless of race or creed. People of Jewish faith are no exception to this American principle. They enjoy their rights as *Americans,* not as Jews. They are free to be Jews here, *because* they are Americans. And their American status is rooted in individual rights.

Because this is so and because Judaism, like any religion, is deeply personal and individual, there is no separatism involved between Americanism and Judaism. One may be a part of the American people and worship in Judaism without any conflict of loyalties or attachments.

It follows therefore that in their general, democratic effort to reduce internal tensions of race or creed, it is in the interests of Americans to understand two things about their fellow citizens of Jewish faith:

1. All Jews do not subscribe to ideas or programs that seem to reflect Jewish solidarity and difference, other than religious integrity.

2. Dissent and rejection of ideas and programs stressing "Jewish" unity have as much validity in the history of Jews and Judaism as any ideas or programs which seem to reflect Jewish solidarity.

For people other than Jews to resist the apparent prevalence of "Jewish" nationalism and affirm that Judaism is a highly personalized conviction about God, the universe, and mankind is not, therefore, to violate either the feelings of Jews or the traditions of Judaism.

Recognition of this important fact might short-circuit both Jewish segregationalists and professional anti-Semites. It could enable liberals, both in Judaism and outside that faith, to join hands in a common effort to strengthen the basic American principle of individual rights in an area of our national life where protagonists of separatism and minority-national rights may wreak havoc.

In plain English, to oppose Jewish separatism and segregation in our national life, except in the field of religion, is *not* the equivalent of anti-Semitism. In fact, to encourage such separatism and segregation is generally construed *as* anti-Semitism when practiced by others than Jews. Oddly enough, when practiced by "Jewish" nationalists it takes on for some — but not for all — the coloration of a virtue.

The "whys" and "wherefores" of this confusion may be explained at least in part by history and to some extent by the processes with which "history" is recorded.

The chain of evidence reaches back to the Biblical records. The rest of this book will engage in a highly selective and partisan approach to history, from the Bible to the present.

Such selectivity and partisanship, I hope, will not lead to, or be considered as, distortion of history. I am not attempting

to present here *the* history of Judaism. I am attempting only to outline *a* history of one of two broad traditions in Judaism. This book will be an honest and accurate record, despite its selectivity and partisanship, if it correctly puts together the links in the chain of the tradition of universalism in Judaism. Others have told—and will tell—the story of "Jewish" nationalism. The only inexcusable misrepresentation is for anyone to make it appear that Jews and Judaism developed with a uniformity and that the tradition either of universalism or of nationalism can be said to embrace all of Judaism.

Such a selective and partisan approach is therefore justified by two facts:

1. Since both traditions, that of nationalism and that of universalism, exist throughout all of this history, an account of one of these two partisan approaches is legitimate as long as it is identified as such.
2. There is such a preponderance of material on the nationalist side of the controversy, with such undue weight given to Jewish solidarity and unity, that an examination of the alternate interpretations is almost demanded in order to make ultimate objectivity possible.

The tradition of divisiveness and dissent from Jewish unity goes back to the Bible. The record of such differences of opinion and rebellion against authority is frequently obscured in the Bible, however. This is understandable when it is realized that before the time of David there are practically no contemporary records in the Biblical texts. While events from the time of David and after were frequently recorded by contemporaneous writers, it is also true that in many places there are conflicting reports, with different emphases. Passages by one author are also frequently twined and inter-

twined with those of another who may have been of an entirely different school and viewpoint. The result is that only the most careful and meticulous examination of the texts reveals the varied viewpoints that may have prevailed regarding any event.

Where the records are not contemporary, there was often a lag of centuries between the event itself and the time it was written down in the form in which it now appears in the Bible.

The story of the event was probably kept alive, in the way of most primitive peoples, by being orally transmitted from father to son and from generation to generation in the folklore of the people who were eventually to become Jews.

THE BIBLE—History and Theology

There are two sources of information for such a review of history. One is the Bible itself. The Bible is not only a compendium of religious literature but also one of the great source books of ancient history. The record, it must be borne in mind, was written to a very large extent by men who were primarily concerned with theology or politics.

Protagonists of these several theologies or partisanships, however, usually gave themselves away, unwittingly, by language peculiarities or by dated references to extraneous events or ideas which did not seem either dated or extraneous to them; or by an account of an event that is so flawless and perfect that it is obviously not an unedited or unvarnished reproduction of something that happened with human inconsistencies. Skilled scientists can pretty well detect these warning signals—and have. They have enabled us to read the Biblical sources as a human record, with many partisan and theological refurbishings.

But we do not always have to rely upon the Bible itself. Interestingly enough, scattered throughout the ancient world are confirmatory bits of external evidence. Archeological studies carried on in Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and Palestine have thrown considerable light on passages of the Bible not completely understandable without this independent supporting evidence.

THE CRITICAL METHOD

The method employed in this book will use evidence from both of these sources — the Bible itself and such external material as may be pertinent. Let me give you an example:

Most people are familiar with the usual creation story: that God created the world in six days, climaxing His effort with the creation of Man and resting on the seventh day. The first chapter of the Book of Genesis describes the creation of the world according to this schedule.

But in the second chapter of Genesis we come across this passage: *"No shrub of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground."* You see the contradiction. In the first chapter there was the account of the creation. The second chapter begins a totally new account of the same event.

The first-chapter story has a fairly definite literary style. It is a day-by-day report of the acts of creation with each day's record ending in the refrain, *"And there was evening and there was morning"* — and then the mention of the particular day. The story builds to the climax of the seventh day as the

Sabbath which God "blessed" and "hallowed." By comparison the second chapter is a rambling, primitive account. The story in the first chapter does not describe in detail how God created man. It just says He created man *"in the image of God."*

The second-chapter story tells of God reaching down, taking a handful of clay, and breathing life into it. In the first chapter, God creates man and woman at the same time. The second chapter contains the account of God creating woman only after He realized that "it is not good that the man should be alone."

If you will consider these two different stories for a moment and think of the popular conception of the Biblical account of creation, you will see how we ourselves have become involved in this historic process of fusing and merging divergent accounts into a single narrative, with the inconsistencies eliminated. For the popular memory of the Biblical tales recalls the first-chapter story of the creation of all the world except man. That part of the creation story, in its most popular form, is taken from the story in the second chapter of Genesis. Actually, history has fused the two for our generation, and if someone were to write a new Bible today, based upon oral accounts, as so much of the original Bible was put together, this new theoretical Scripture would probably begin with a story of creation that would be a combination of parts of the first chapter and parts of the second chapter of Genesis. This is an example of how popular memory and preferences may, occasionally, play tricks with "history" even in an age as much overawed by science and precision as ours.

Some 150 or 175 years ago, Biblical scholars realized that the Bible, which was considered to be the word of God and

perfect, unchangeable and unchallengeable, was after all replete with this kind of internal contradiction.

One of the ways by which scholars date these passages is by elements of literary style and ideological content. This is a technique which students of literature frequently apply to the writings of many ages and many men. The use of certain words; the references to certain ideas which it is impossible to have known before a certain date in the history of human thought, the existence of what amounts to colloquialisms are all clues in this process. Students of English literature, for example, employ such criteria in the still-current debates over the authenticity of some of Shakespeare's works, in examinations of Chaucer, and in other research projects in the same general field. In much the same way, scholars looking at the original Hebrew text of the Bible can tell its approximate date from internal evidence of both style and religious content.

The first creation story — the neat little story which divides the creation of the world into seven days — is a very, very late literary effort. It reflects an advanced development, both in literary style and in theological ideas. The idea of a day of rest as a religious privilege and even an obligation of man is, for example, a very late idea.

The second-chapter story is a simple human myth which tries to explain the creation of the world and the existence of human life. It does not point any moral. Subsequently it leads to the simple, primitive myth of the Garden of Eden and the serpent in an effort to explain how evil came into the world. These two stories, read against the very brief background and abstract of the content of each, reveal that there is a span of centuries between them; that they were written by two entirely different men or groups of men, and that each of

them, in writing the particular story for which he was responsible, had a different purpose in mind.

This is a simple example of the premise that practically every Biblical passage was written by some partisan. This is true of the passages whose authors are known as well as of the passages which seem to be anonymous.

RELIGIOUS IDEAS DEVELOP

The Bible also throws light on the evolution of religious ideas. Glorification of a savage moral code is found in a text which occurs in one of the very earliest passages of the Bible as a part of the story of Cain and Abel: *"For I have slain a man for wounding me, and a young man for bruising me. If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech, seventy and seven-fold."* By that code, if a man were killed, the people who were interested in avenging his death had a right to wreak vengeance to almost any extent that they desired. This was something like justice through a system of feuds. The development of the later idea—"an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"—shows an evolution with respect for the sanctity of human life. In much later law-codes the Bible reveals a period of social legislation related to the religion of Judaism, in which money could be paid for certain damages to a person and, in certain circumstances, even for death. So justice advanced beyond the primitive idea of direct physical retribution as it is reflected in the earlier law-codes.

It becomes obvious, therefore, that Judaism was not a religion revealed in perfection to a limited and well-defined nationalistic group at Mt. Sinai. Judaism has evolved from a very basic, primitive, and elementary tribalism that one would expect to find among people who lived some three

thousand years ago. From that period to the time of the prophets, Judaism went through a process of refinement until it developed the idea — which I believe to be its really majestic and unique contribution — of ethical monotheism; of universal values which were applicable to all men.

So much for a preview of the *religion* which eventually became Judaism.

ORIGIN OF THE JEWS

Let me now turn to the historical origins of the *people* who came to be known as Jews. For, "Jewish" nationalists and segregationalists to the contrary notwithstanding, these two, people and faith, are not always the same. Historical events happened to Jews which had no important bearing on Judaism. And for good or ill, Judaism has not always influenced people who were Jews as much as it might have.

Essentially, the balance of this book will deal with Judaism. Only that part of the history of Jews will be considered here which is pertinent to those events or personalities accounting for important developments in the evolution of that religious faith.

The origins of these people are popularly associated with the usual story of the Exodus from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the wandering for forty years in the wilderness, the death of Moses, the leadership of Joshua, the story of marching around the walls of Jericho, and the almost unchallenged and unimpeded conquest of the Land of Canaan or Palestine. This story purports to tell us how the Israelitish tribes conquered the land which was Palestine and in a portion of which the State of Israel is now sovereign.

But the Bible itself contains a very important and imposing

record which contradicts this smooth-flowing account of the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan. We come now to an excellent example of the way in which scholars use internal evidence in the Bible to piece together a historically logical account of events that have become oversimplified in the melting process of legend and tradition.

The important piece of internal evidence in the Bible is found in the first chapter of the Book of Judges. According to the Book of Joshua, the whole Land of Canaan was conquered and, as the Joshua story ends, the Israelitish or Hebrew tribes were the dominant people in the country. But the very first verse of the Book of Judges reads: *"And it came to pass, after the death of Joshua, that the Children of Israel asked the Lord saying, 'Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanites to fight against them?'"* The Lord answers with a schedule of events completing the conquest which the previous Book of Joshua would have us believe had already been achieved. The Book of Judges then goes on to say, in a very staccato style, that the Israelitish tribes conquered this city and that city and the other city. The Judges account contains none of the elaborations, none of the marching around walls that fall down at the blowing of trumpets, that we find in the Book of Joshua.

Now, all through this story in the first chapter of the Book of Judges, after the conquest of almost every city, this phrase keeps recurring: *"And he [Judah is the "he" usually referred to] drove out the inhabitants of the hill country, for he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron."* This is an allusion to the superior weapons of the Canaanites. "Iron chariots" were undoubtedly a kind of ancient "tank." The primitive peoples who had come in

from the desert, whether they had been in Egypt or not, did not have anything comparable. These desert tribes therefore could drive the older, settled people out of the hill countries, but they could not conquer the valleys. The war probably resulted in a kind of stalemate.

Eventually there came to be a mingling of both peoples and their cultures, with the Israelite-Hebrew tribes holding the undesirable hill territory while the original inhabitants held the valleys and cities. As we have seen, Jerusalem was held by the latter for several centuries.

Later the Prophets complained bitterly about the infiltration of Canaanite gods into the religion of the Hebrews. These prophetic complaints document the theory, which can be constructed from the evidence in the Book of Judges, that there was no great unified conquest of the Land of Canaan by an ordered and disciplined nation. What actually happened was the infiltration of the land by a number of loosely federated tribes who seized the less desirable areas the Canaanites either could not defend or did not care enough about to defend. When the invading tribes established a foothold, they settled down. Gradually they merged with the Canaanite people to such an extent that there were grafted on to the Israelite religion a great many Canaanite practices and a good deal of Canaanite culture. The eventual language of these Israelites — Hebrew — is probably of Canaanitish origin.

There is a further piece of internal evidence in the long poem called "The Song of Deborah" in the fifth chapter of the Book of Judges.

Deborah was one of the great heroines of this early period of Israelitish history. At a time when it looked as though the people who had come to the Land of Canaan from Egypt were

going to fail to control the country, Deborah rallied a number of these tribes and they defeated the Canaanites. In her victory song, this great prophetess, as she was called at the time, complained in bitter and satiric terms about several of the tribes who were supposed to have been included in the Exodus but who did not come to fight against the Canaanites. One of them was the tribe of Reuben, of whom Deborah says bitingly, "*they had good resolves of the heart*" but they stayed by their sheep while the rest of the people of the country were fighting. She also complained of the tribe of Dan, which was in the northern part of the country, that they sat by their ships failing to answer her call for a unified resistance to the Canaanites.

Now, if these people had been together in slavery in Egypt, if they had come out of Egypt and spent forty years together in the wilderness, and if together they had achieved the easy and complete conquest of the Land of Canaan which is recorded in the Book of Joshua, we have another contradiction. In the first place, why did they have to conquer the Canaanites all over again? And if conceivably a resurgent Canaanite power required reconquest, why does Deborah, after a successful battle, complain about disunity, lack of response, and refusal of a number of the tribes who supposedly were part of a unified nation to join her coalition? Why does she complain that whole tribes would have no part in this war? "The Song of Deborah" strengthens suspicion of the authenticity of the record in the Book of Joshua, describing the orderly unified conquest of Canaan.

Furthermore, in one of the Books of Samuel dating from a still later period, there are several very interesting passages about David. These references report that it was not until the time of David that the city of Jerusalem was conquered. David had to make Hebron his capital for the early part of

his reign as King over Israel. This made him so unhappy that he rallied his forces and only then — two or three hundred years after the reputed story of the Exodus — did these Israelites finally conquer the city of Jerusalem. Here again, the internal contradictions of the Bible offer clues to a better understanding of the history of these early periods.

Bible scholars looking at this evidence came to regard the traditional Exodus story with suspicion for a number of additional reasons. There are, in the first place, too many miracles in one story for any sound historian to accept. In the second place, the whole story of the wandering in the wilderness for forty years has suspicious overtones. Scholars believe that the number "forty" was a magic number among ancient peoples. It occurs frequently in ancient mythologies, and repeatedly in the Bible. You remember the story of the Flood — it rained for forty days and forty nights — and the story of Moses remaining on Mt. Sinai for the same period of time to receive the Ten Commandments. Remember too, the story of *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh,* which comes from the mythology of the same part of the world.

The frequent use of such "magic" figures was a warning signal to scholars. If the number "seven" or the number "forty" occurred repeatedly in a story or a manuscript, they immediately suspected its authenticity, although accepting the probability that the story was based on some actual event. Furthermore, the Book of Joshua, which is a part of this conventional Exodus story, is a glorification of one personality. Joshua was the leader for all of the miraculous conquest of Canaan. One would suspect such a personalized account, to the same extent that one is inclined to question the historical objectivity of the personal memoirs of any individual.

The process of reconstructing and reevaluating all of this

evidence is not yet completed. Modern archeological discoveries and rereading of the Biblical texts in the light of new information obtained continues to add to the process. But without closing the door on future discoveries and reconstructions of history that may still fill in some of the details, there are some generally recognized facts which may be reported here to fill in this chapter of history. We can, at least, agree upon the broad outlines of a theory that explains more logically than the traditional Exodus-Joshua account, how people candidly described as slaves came to conquer a civilization obviously superior in most things, including the skills and tools of war.

THE FIRST MIGRATION

Most scholars believe that these Hebrew or Israelitish tribes entered the Land of Canaan in three migrations over a period of perhaps five hundred years. The earliest one may be represented in the story of Abraham and probably occurred about the year 1700 B.C. If this is so, these first tribes came, as the Abraham story indicates, from quite far east, from Ur of the Chaldees, from Babylonia.

There would be a logical explanation for such a migration. At that time, when people experienced famine or suffered some other catastrophe from natural causes, they picked up and moved on.

Some of the very earliest records, outside the Bible, indicate that the period around 1750–1700 B.C. was one of extreme political instability in the Middle East. Kingdoms were rising and falling, with resultant chaos among the people who lived in that area.

As a part of this political unrest, it would be natural to find a considerable migration of people seeking escape. Among such "refugees" there appears to have been a large group known as Hurrians who, in search of more settled conditions or perhaps driven out of their usual home by invaders, moved toward the western part of the Middle East region, toward Canaan or Palestine.

It is probable that the Abraham story reflects the migration into Canaan of a part of this Hurrian group. Abraham represents a part of this larger migration which came to be known as Hebrews.

It is interesting, for our purposes in this book, to observe that the word "Hebrew" did not at this time mean a unified national or even ethnic or tribal group. The word "Hebrew" itself means "to be a crosser, a transient, a nomad." Modern scholars point out the fact that "Hebrews" were found among many nations of that time. Some think they were a kind of adventurer or soldier of fortune, people who were willing to sell their services to any nation and who lived a completely uprooted and nomadic life.

This is an important bit of knowledge, for it emphasizes the diverse origins of the people who later, through a chain of historic circumstances, were to come together in a transient period of national sovereignty in Canaan.

These people, these Hebrews represented in the Abraham story, probably followed what is known as the "fertile crescent." There were stops along the way of some historic duration, since, contrary to the purposeful migration of the traditional story where Abraham is commanded to leave his land and go to the new land which God will show him, the actual migration was dictated by expediency and by the general dis-

order that was prevalent in the entire geographic area at this time.

Eventually, however, this group reached Northern Canaan or Palestine and appear to have settled down. It is important to remember that these earliest people who, after the passage of much time, were eventually to become Jews, did not come to this new land as part of an invading and conquering nation. They came as immigrants. It is even suggested by some scholars that these early immigrants were not Semites and, further, that that fact accounts for the existence of a number of non-Semitic practices and customs that are recorded in the Bible in connection with the lives of the Patriarchs and later.

The details of these departures from what are commonly accepted Semitic practices, which departures lead to the theory that these earliest Hebrews were not Semites, need not be included here. It is sufficient to make note of this and other facts which prove conclusively the diverse, almost individualized character of this earliest migration. In no sense could they be considered a nation. Their life pattern in Canaan was not one of unity or national purpose or cohesiveness. The predominant pattern of their life was much more that of assimilation, living and mingling on friendly terms with the nations.

THE SECOND MIGRATION

The second wave of migration may well have been — and probably was — more in the nature of a conquest. It may have occurred somewhere about 1400 B.C. or even a little later. The people involved were known as Habiru. They seem to have

been part of another vast movement of a larger group called Hyksos. The migration of the larger Hyksos group involved Egypt as well as Palestine, and Habiru or Hebrews as subgroups of the larger migration entered both countries.

The Palestinian part of this migration is probably reflected in the Biblical stories of the conquest of Jericho, Shechem, Shiloh, and Mizpeh. The only importance to attach to the names of these cities, for the purposes of this book, is to know that they were in the northerly part of Palestine or Canaan. This fact is important because it was the northern part of the country that was conquered first by these Hebrews, and it was in the northern part of the country where they first established something of a foothold and settled as units or tribes or with at least some of the characteristics of nationhood.

Originally, these Hebrews, or Habiru, may have been invited in as professional soldiers in a period of intrigue and war such as prevailed in Canaan at this time. Eventually these people in this second migration formed the nucleus of a nation themselves and organized a kind of confederacy.

It was probably under this confederacy, organized to ward off a threatening resurgence of Canaanite power, that the earliest immigrants came to be identified with this later group.

It would be wrong to give the impression here that even this second migration was a well-planned, systematic "conquest," such as is reflected in the Book of Joshua. Invited in originally as professional soldiers, negotiating alliances with the petty kings and Canaanite intriguers, the Habiru, perhaps over a period of a century or more, became the dominant group in limited parts of the country.

Again, while the broad outlines of this second migration

are interesting, for the purposes of this book, the details are too technical and complicated for elaboration here.

Only several obvious conclusions are pertinent to this history.

The first is that, again, the origins of these people are diverse. They entered Canaan sporadically, probably with differing motivations through separate alliances or opportunities, and required something more than a century to realize any truly common interests among themselves or with the earlier immigrants represented in the Abraham story.

Secondly, it is important to remember that their operations were confined to the north. They were a separate kingdom, even when they finally coalesced to the extent of a confederacy. They had no connection with the southern tribes, who were to enter Palestine or Canaan later as the third of these migrations. This northern confederacy, later to become the Kingdom of Israel, had a culture different from and older than that of the southern tribes or the later Kingdom of Judah. There was never any real unity between these groups. Although David succeeded in uniting them for a time and his son Solomon managed to maintain the unity, after Solomon's death, the old, traditional, and historical division emerged.

There is a final word of explanation that should probably be included about this second migration. The traditional account associates much of it with Joshua *after* the time of Moses. This is probably one of those situations in which tradition has played games with history. For, although the territory associated with Joshua's exploits was "conquered" by this second migration, Joshua and his predecessor Moses had not yet appeared upon the scene. Later, nationalized accounts, written for the purpose of trying to establish a unified

and national tradition, simply telescoped this second migration into a sequel to the Moses story, which represents the third of the migrations that brought these Hebrews to Canaan.

THE THIRD MIGRATION

The third migration, about which we know most, is represented in the Moses story and the whole conventional account of the Exodus.

This is one of the places where we may draw upon "external" evidence, sources outside the Bible, for support and information.

Some years ago, archeologists discovered a series of letters written by the Governor of Jerusalem to his king, one of the Pharaohs of Egypt. The date of this letter has been estimated at about 1400 B.C. And the Governor's report says, "The king has no longer any territory, the Habiru have devastated all the king's territory."

This is an obvious reference to the successful operations of the second migration.

The date of the Exodus, under Moses' leadership, is probably about 1200 B.C., two hundred years after this governor's report of Habiru conquering the land. Now then, if you are willing to agree with most scholars that "Habiru" means Hebrews, the complete significance of all these facts becomes clear.

What it all adds up to is that two hundred years before Moses led the tribes out of Egypt, there were Hebrew tribes in Canaan and they had made sufficient progress in conquering the country to warrant such a gloomy report to the Pharaoh of Egypt.

This third migration had made its way up from the south and, in a slow and gradual "conquest" not unlike that which characterized the activity of the second migration in the north, managed to win control of a part of southern Canaan. Their control was not complete. Canaanites continued to live in the same territory, and this group of southern tribes remained territorially separated from the north by a strip running through Jerusalem that was not conquered until the time of David.

It is unarguably clear therefore from the record, no matter how scholars may disagree over some of the details, that the origins of these early Hebrew peoples, later to become Jews, were as diverse, disorganized, and varied as it is possible to imagine. These diverse origins and differing periods of entrance into Canaan left cultural and political schisms that were never eliminated and, on the contrary, made the northern Israelites and the southern Judeans enemies and antagonists as often as they reacted with any common interests.

CALL OF THE DESERT GOD

Why, then, did Deborah think she had any basis or reason to call on these diverse peoples, who had come to this land over several centuries, for help and to join her confederacy of part of these northern tribes? She did it on the grounds that all of these people, at one time or another, had a common desert background and were desert people who by one means or another had moved into this settled agricultural country.

And despite the fact that they had lived among the Canaanites for varying periods and that some of them had achieved a

considerable degree of assimilation, she counted upon a lingering memory, which she hoped to find, of a desert god.

It is significant that her appeal is not to the memory of a common origin nor to a great king who might have been glorified in a common history; nor does she appeal on the basis of memory of a former common land or national experience. It is a god which she uses as a rallying cry.

She did not say, "Come and help Deborah" or "Come and help the three or four tribes of Israelites, who have been in Egypt and who are now in Canaan." She said, *"Come and fight in the name of the Lord, Yahweh,"* which is the proper name of a desert god whose memory Deborah had reason to believe would arouse common action among these people who had had a common desert background.

Actually, the people Deborah sought to rally were in the process of transition from a nomadic to an agricultural life and of accommodating themselves to the agricultural civilization of Canaan. Their worship of the desert god had already been diluted by their worship of the agricultural gods. Deborah therefore was hardly successful in involving these earlier settlers in her war against the Canaanites. They were already partly Canaanite themselves.

SUMMARY

From the very beginning of the history of these people (not Jews, but properly called Israelites and Hebrews) there is no commonalty, with the single exception of the dimming memory of a desert origin and a desert god, allegiance to whom had already begun to diminish as the earlier tribes began to integrate themselves into the Land of Canaan. Common nationality, common alle-

giance, common social background, common ancestry, any of the things that have been grafted on by later writers who wanted to develop a national philosophy and tradition for Jews and Judaism — none of these is really substantiated in history. All of these attributes of commonalty are mentioned in the records; but, for one reason or another, competent scholars have come to regard them with suspicion. These were heterogeneous people, with varied interests and backgrounds; and Judaism, as an historic religion, was not yet born.

2

HOW DID JEWS COME TO BELIEVE IN ONE GOD?

THE PEOPLE who were to become Jews, then, did not come to the Land of Canaan at one time or as one nation. They probably entered in three migrations at different times and from different places in the area of the world we now call the Middle East. The only thing they had in common was the dim memory of a desert ancestry reaching back to the great barren areas in the hinterland of Palestine or Canaan and a tenuous loyalty to a desert god.

Beyond that, the origins of these people are so obscure and diverse that it is impossible to describe them in detail in this book, which has essentially a different purpose. But it is unmistakably clear that any talk of purity of race or common nationality or sense of "ethnic" unity is romantic nonsense when applied to these early Hebrews or Israelites.

THE DESERT GOD-CONCEPT

The desert god is the golden thread, so to speak, which distinguishes Judaism from the amalgam of living and religion with which these Hebrew or Israelitish people came into contact in the Land of Canaan. It accounts for the Prophets.

It is probably the stubborn strain which created divisions

in Judaism at the time of the Roman Empire. Part of the Jews of that period adamantly refused to make any accommodations to the paganisms of the Hellenistic world. Part of the Jews, frequently called Hellenistic Jews, did make concessions. It was largely in the latter group that Paul found his early support and from which earliest Christianity was born. Later, with the influence of the Roman Empire supporting these Hellenists, Christianity became the dominant religion of the Empire and subsequently of the Western World.

What was the nature of this desert God? Where did it come from? How did these people come to be identified with this god-concept which plays so consistent a role in the development of Judaism?

THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT

Of the three migrations of people who came into Canaan and subsequently formed an Israelitish or Hebrew nation, only the records of the third or last tell us very much about this religious development.

It is interesting — and somewhat historically — to know that these tribes and their subsequent confederacies were not yet really Jews; that there was no "Jewish" nation. It was not for many years after these earliest origins of these people that we find the word "Jews" in the Biblical texts. Probably the earliest such reference is in the Second Book of Kings, chapter 18, verse 26, in which the language of the people of the southern Kingdom of Judah is called "the Jews' language." This passage is in connection with an incident close to the period of the Babylonian Exile, and the people themselves and their religion are not spoken of, by the Bible, as Jews until after the Exile.

As we review the record of the third or last migration, therefore, it should be remembered that the people involved were not Jews nor was their religion Judaism. For the story of this third migration is contained in the largely legendary account of the Exodus from Egypt under the leadership of Moses about the year 1200 B.C. — some six hundred years before the Babylonian Exile.

The account of this migration informs us that the Israelites of this third migration had been slaves in Egypt. This is probably an accurate reflection of their condition. The Bible tells us that they lived in the Land of Goshen, which reaches up from the northeastern part of what is still Egypt toward the Land of Canaan.

How these Hebrews or Israelites came to Egypt is largely a matter of speculation. But it is generally agreed that their movement into the country was as disorganized and sporadic and fragmentized as had been the entrance of the other Hebrew or Israelite tribes into Canaan or Palestine. They probably came over a period of a great many years and under different conditions. Some of them may have been part of an early invasion of desert tribes into Egypt at a period of deterioration in Egypt's own national life. Part of them may have come as professional soldiers of fortune, as some of the Habiru or Hebrews entered Canaan.

But one thing is certain. No *nation* of Hebrews or Israelites lived in Egypt. We have already seen that, long before the time of the Exodus, two of the three migrations of these desert tribes had already settled in Canaan. There is unmistakable evidence in the Bible and in other sources that, during all of the time there were Hebrews in Egypt, there were also Hebrews in Canaan. Furthermore, the number of these Hebrews who were in Egypt seems to have been very small;

nothing like the 600,000 men plus dependents to which reference is made in the Book of Exodus. While not too great an importance may be attached to it, there is an interesting statement in Exodus I, verse 15, indicating that two midwives were enough for this settlement.

These are important considerations again, in any attempt to understand the origins and development of Jews and Judaism. For the significance of this group in Egypt was not in its numbers, nor its national strength or purpose. It lay entirely in the record of their religious experience.

The Exodus did not give birth to a nation nor release a nation from slavery. There was no enslaved nation to be released. There were only a few people and the significance of their place in history might have been nothing at all had it not been for the religious aspect of their story.

It is certain that no matter how many people were involved and no matter what had been the manner of their entrance into Egypt, at about 1250 B.C. these Hebrews were enslaved. A powerful Pharaoh had apparently succeeded in strengthening Egypt's internal life and, along with other elements in the population, these Hebrews were employed to perform heavy labor, among which the building of cities was one. There are the familiar Biblical references to their having to make bricks without straw. The status of these Habiru or Hebrews had deteriorated to that of slaves.

The status of a slave in antiquity implied a great many things beyond economic and social problems. Almost everything in the ancient world was related to religion in one way or another. One of the first things that an enslaved people would deduce would be that the gods of their masters were stronger than their own. Very frequently, enslaved people adopted the gods of their conquerors.

There was no spiritual conception of religion at this time among any peoples — Israelites, Egyptians, or anyone else. The validity of a religion was demonstrated by whether the crops were good, whether there was sufficient rain, whether a people was successful or unsuccessful in war. When the status of these Hebrew tribes became that of slaves in the land of Egypt, they probably reasoned that their gods were inferior to the gods of the Egyptians; a logical conclusion under the circumstances.

Moreover, as slaves, these people were psychologically prepared for some personality or some formula for salvation, redemption, and release from bondage.

The way was cleared, therefore, for the appearance of Moses and the spectacular developments associated with his career and leadership. Nor is it surprising that the chapters in this story that follow immediately after the appearance of Moses are so inextricably woven into the life of the desert. From the desert these Hebrew tribes had come originally. While they had enjoyed a measure of success, acceptance, and perhaps even prosperity in Egypt, they were satisfied to remain. But with the transformation of their lot into that of slaves, it is understandable that the leader, the god, and the route elected for deliverance from bondage were all saturated with their early desert background.

CHARACTER OF MOSES

Moses is one of the great characters in the history of mankind. It is probably accurately said of him that if he had not actually lived, we should have had to create him. Certain events definitely occurred at the time he is believed to have lived which can be accounted for only by the rise of some such

strong and able personality. There is also apparently some truth in the story that for part of his life he lived in royal estate in Egypt. Whether the daughter of Pharaoh actually found him in the bullrushes and took him to live in Pharaoh's house, is questionable. That is, incidentally, a legendary pattern which recurs over and over in the history of many ancient peoples. Some hero is "found in the bullrushes" by some prominent person and, by reason of this miraculous discovery, becomes a person of great distinction.

Such a legend is found about an early king of Babylonia, Sargon the Elder, who lived about 2600 B.C., or about 1400 years before Moses. The similarity of the Sargon story to the Moses story may be seen in the following incompletely preserved lines from the former:

> Sargon, the mighty king, the king of Agade, am I,
> My mother was lowly, my father I knew not,
> And the brother of my father dwells in the mountain.
> My city is Azuripanu, which lies on the banks of the Euphrates.
> My lowly mother conceived me, in secret she brought me forth.
> She set me in a basket of rushes, with bitumen she closed my door:
> She cast me into the river, which rose not over me.
> The river bore me up, unto Akki, the irrigator, it carried me.
> Akki, the irrigator, with . . . lifted me out,
> Akki, the irrigator, as his own son . . . reared me,
> Akki, the irrigator, as his gardener appointed me.
> While I was a gardener, the goddess Ishtar loved me,
> And for . . . four years I ruled the kingdom.
> The black-headed peoples I ruled, I governed.

Whether or not the bullrushes story is true, Moses appears to have had associations with the aristocracy of Egypt which left certain traceable characteristics in his life.

But these very intimacies with Egyptian royalty also created problems for Moses. For a number of reasons which we may guess, he did not or was not allowed to forget his origin among the enslaved, nomadic Hebrew tribes in the Land of Goshen.

We are told by a story in the second chapter of the Book of Exodus that one day Moses saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew slave and Moses killed the Egyptian. Fearing that, despite his royal associations, the Pharaoh would punish him for siding against the Egyptian slave master and in favor of the Hebrew, Moses fled to the land or tribe of Midian in the desert.

It is also interesting that as the second chapter of Exodus tells the story, Moses is called "an Egyptian" — not a Hebrew — by the Midianites who first saw him.

Moses settled down with this Midianite tribe or nation and eventually he married the daughter of the priest and leader of the Midianites.

This whole interlude in the life of Moses is extremely interesting in our effort to piece together the earliest origins of these people and to find, in those origins, the beginnings of the religious development which was someday to lead to Judaism.

For it is to be noted here that Moses, first of all, married a Midianite girl; not a Hebrew girl. This fact may strengthen our belief that originally these Hebrews were not themselves a nation or a unit of any kind. They were simply desert people, probably members of many tribes of diverse backgrounds and histories. Under such circumstances it would not be unusual for Moses to have married someone from a tribe or nation known as Midian.

Secondly, the whole tenor of this chapter in Moses' life in-

dicates that he found no problem of adjustment to the life of these Midianites, including acceptance and worship of their god.

The matter-of-fact way in which the Bible reveals these significant details, both by omission and comment, indicates again that in the original records, before partisan, nationalist-minded authors rewrote this history, these desert origins were a normal part of the memory and traditions of these Hebrews.

Nor, it is to be noted, did Moses' Midianite marriage and association with the Midianite god create any eyebrow lifting among his fellow Hebrews whom he had left in Egypt. On the contrary, Moses' return was in the role of a savior and the Midianite god became the focal point, the spiritual dynamo for the Exodus.

YAHWEH REVEALED TO MOSES

We come now to a very interesting passage in the third chapter of the Book of Exodus: *"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the Priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the farthest end of the desert and he came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb."* Then follows the story of the bush that burned and yet was not consumed. God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush.

Many gods of antiquity had their places of revelation on a mountain or in a cave or in a combination of both. So Moses went to this mountain which was supposed to have been the place where, in a literal sense, the god lived.

There is then reported a conversation between this god and Moses, during which the god tells Moses to go back and lead his people out of slavery from the Land of Goshen to the Land of Canaan. *"And Moses said unto God, 'Behold, when I come*

unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, "The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you"; and they shall say unto me, "What is His Name?" What shall I say unto them?' And God said unto Moses, 'I Am that I Am.' And He said, 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, "I Am hath sent me unto you.' "

One of the great mysteries of these primitive religions was the name of God. The specific name of God was, in a very literal sense, a terrible word. If not properly used, it could wreak havoc upon a man or upon a people. Its use therefore had to be guarded very carefully. That tradition still exists in Orthodox Judaism. The Orthodox Jew even today will still not use the word "Yahweh," which is the correct pronunciation of the name of this desert god.

The important fact in the passage, however, is that this god has referred to himself as the god of these people — or the god of the fathers of these people — who are enslaved in Goshen. Yet Moses does not know the name of this god and he is convinced the people will not know the god's name either.

This would seem to indicate either that this god was not known by the Hebrews or had been forgotten, if he had ever been known.

In connection with the other facts relating this whole episode to the earliest desert origins of these Hebrews, it is entirely probable that the second possibility is the more likely explanation; this god was the god of their ancient desert background. He had been forgotten by the generation that had lived as slaves. It is even possible that they had consciously and purposefully adopted the gods of their masters, the Egyptians, the fortunes of the Hebrews fell and those of the Egyptians rose.

That Moses knew little of this god himself, despite his asso-

ciations with the Midianites, is not strange and does not negate this theory. For Moses' relationship to this god in this passage is something more than that of a mere worshiper. Moses is here approaching a relationship which involves his understanding the ritual and mechanics of worship associated with this god. These were matters reserved for the priests and for specialists. Part of that ritual and mechanics would be the proper name of Yahweh, which Moses would not have known before. Only Jethro, as the Midianite priest, would have that knowledge. Yet Moses would have to be initiated into this esoteric information if he was to become the active agent allying this god and the Hebrews in an undertaking as momentous as the Exodus.

It must be remembered that these were not religions in which an approach to god was simple; a matter of spirit and mind. In the absence of all this specialized knowledge, it would have been only natural, under the circumstances of this god urging him to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt, for Moses to claim that he did not know the working formula with which one approached this god in such a partnership.

Despite these "technical" problems, however, this god whom Moses encountered at the Midianite shrine so resembled the god with whom his people had originally had contact in the desert, that Moses was encouraged to try for the release of his fellow Hebrews from slavery.

Since we have every reason to consider Moses a great and competent leader, he must have relied a great deal upon the desert tradition that still lived among these people. Otherwise, it is doubtful that he would have risked the Exodus, putting so much responsibility upon the influence of this god.

Moses left his father-in-law and returned to Egypt. In some

way which the Bible does not explain, but which was probably more realistic than the story of the ten plagues and the legend of the division of the Red Sea, we find that after a period of time Moses succeeded in leading the Hebrews out of Egypt.

One theory has it that a strong Pharaoh, who had successfully enslaved these desert tribes, died and was succeeded by his son, who was a weak ruler. Whatever the historic circumstances that made it possible, it is clear that Moses elected to side with the enslaved Israelites against the Egyptian aristocracy among whom he had lived a part of his life. Under the banner of Yahweh, apparently not entirely unfamiliar to them, the Hebrews escaped.

They probably went on a three-day journey, proceeding immediately to the mountain where this god had first spoken to Moses. From there, after an important ceremony in which a covenant or contract was made between this god and these Hebrews, the people probably proceeded to the southern part of Canaan or the Negeb.

It is doubtful that the chronology of the desert wanderings is accurate, as it is related in the traditional story of the Old Testament. Some scholars believe that once the contract was established, uniting this god and these people, an attempt was made to enter Canaan from the south. But the Negeb was — as it still is — a poor country and tribes already living there might well have resisted any efforts by newcomers to impose more upon the land. The Moses migration therefore may have been repulsed and prevented from entering the country on its first attempt. Scholars who hold to this theory then reason that, failing to push their way into the land, these refugees from Egypt returned to the desert where they may have wandered again, as nomads, for a generation. Here, they may

also have made alliances with other desert tribes. Moses continued in his role of leader, perhaps forming a confederation of some kind with other desert tribes, not unlike the confederations that have been created by the Hebrews who had lived in Canaan and never been in Egypt.

There are other scholars who believe that after the stop at the mountain shrine, these Hebrews proceeded directly to Canaan and entered or infiltrated the Negeb or southern region immediately. These same scholars believe that the story of forty years' wandering in the wilderness, with an elaborate tabernacle and priesthood, is not an accurate historical record but a later propaganda fiction created by the priestly caste who wanted to show they had origins in the very beginnings of this Yahweh period.

MEETING THE GOD OF MIDIAN

Whichever version is true, it is certain that on the three-day journey from Goshen to Mt. Horeb, suddenly Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, met these newly freed slaves. Jethro, as the priest of the desert god, of course feels vindicated. His god has succeeded in bringing about the release of these people. A passage follows in which Moses expresses the desire to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and Jethro, the priest, then had to show Moses how to offer a sacrifice to this god.

The importance of the passage is that every god of antiquity had his own particular formula for sacrifice. As these Israelites developed their own religion, they also developed these minute, formalistic practices without which no sacrifice could be considered efficacious. The legalistic and involved passages of the Book of Leviticus, for example, contain a great

many of these priestly instructions. Each sacrifice called for different robes, different incantations, and different combinations of priests. It is almost impossible, as a matter of fact, for a modern scholar to reconstruct some of these ceremonies. This highly technical knowledge was the privilege of only the priestly caste. If an ordinary person went into the Holy of Holies, the legend was that he could be struck dead. Moses was a neophyte who knew nothing about the ritual for this particular god. This fact supports the theory that this god either was new to the Israelites or, if not new, had long been neglected and forgotten.

It was Jethro who now showed Moses how to perform the sacrificial rites for this god. Moreover, after the sacrifice was over, Moses proceeded to the process of what he called "judging the people." This was actually the religious leader playing the role of priest and judge at the same time. In the customs of ancient people, the priest was frequently also the judge and medicine man. One of the functions of religion in antiquity involved the priest's deciding issues or litigation between man and man. This was done frequently by drawing lots which, presumably, were elected and determined by the god. Various kinds of divinations were practiced in attempts to determine the will of god or of the gods on human problems. Some primitive religions used the liver of a sheep. The man who divined, the priest, was presumed to be the direct recipient of the will of god, provided the accepted formula was used.

Having offered a sacrificial thanksgiving to the god, Moses told Jethro it was time that he judged the people; really meaning that, as priest, Moses should act in the capacity of judge for any litigation these people might have. Again Jethro re-

minded Moses that he, Moses, did not know how to perform the rites, and proceeded to show him. That does not mean that he told Moses what was right and wrong according to this god. He simply taught Moses the proper technique for determining the will of this particular god for deciding litigations between the people.

The point of Chapter XVIII in the Book of Exodus is that in the two most important functions of a primitive religion, how to sacrifice or to appease the gods or to thank the gods, and how to divine the will of this god in judging between one man's cause and another man's cause — Jethro, the Midianite, was the teacher and Moses, the Israelite, was the pupil.

This indicates that in what appears to be a very normal and understandable procedure, these Hebrews learned about this god from the desert tribe of Midian. This deity was the god of the Midianite people, of whom Moses' father-in-law was the High Priest.

But this god was also a desert god; perhaps the same desert god these people had known back in the days when they were Habiru nomads, wandering about as scattered members of desert tribes. This was a god, or the god, these people had forgotten or forsaken during the period of bondage in Egypt. And now, in an historically understandable way, developing out of Moses' association with the desert tribe of Midian, these Hebrews again became identified with Yahweh, the proper name and pronunciation of the Old Testament god commonly referred to as Jehovah.

There is one further interesting fact. After Moses became the priest of Yahweh for these Hebrew tribes and took the relationship to them that Jethro had to the Midianites, we find that he felt called upon to circumcise his son. Whether that means that the slaves in the Land of Goshen had not practiced

circumcision before this is a matter of opinion. It may also mean that, having forgotten Yahweh during the period of bondage, these Hebrews also had neglected the rite of circumcision. The point is interesting only because it seems clear that one of the rituals related to this desert god was the rite of circumcision.

COVENANT WITH THE DESERT GOD

Now, one more thing had to happen before this desert god really became the god of these Hebrews and considered them to be his people. A contract or a covenant had to be made between the god and the people. The god promised to protect the people, to make them conquerors, to give them prosperity and health — all the things that primitive people wanted from gods. On the other hand, the people had to promise to maintain and observe the ritual and regulations which would keep this relationship intact. All this is dramatized in the Mt. Sinai story: the giving of what was supposed to have been the Ten Commandments.

The importance of this covenant relationship between a god and his people in the ancient world cannot be overstressed. It was a dramatic moment in the history of a primitive religion when, all things having been agreed to in the covenant or contract, this god of the desert tribe came to Moses, probably on the same mountain where the incident of the burning bush had taken place, and proclaimed his name and all of his attributes — merciful, gracious, and long-suffering; and also a god of retribution, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children's children unto the third and unto the fourth generation."

This is, then, a fairly simple and primitive god. We stand

at the threshold of Judaism here – many centuries removed from the religion that was to conceive a universal god and become the parent of two other great faiths.

Moses' outstanding contribution, in connection with this god Yahweh, seems to have been that he took Yahweh from the desert, where he may have been the god of only one tribe, and about this god Moses succeeded in creating a confederation of tribes that eventually settled in southern Canaan.

And what were the obligations which Yahweh exacted of these people, in return for serving them as God? We come here to a very debatable and complex question. There are wide divergences of opinion among scholars as to what was the original set of laws or obligations of these Hebrews to this god.

Some of the generally accepted answers may be stated more negatively than positively. All scholars are fairly certain that the so-called Ten Commandments, in the form in which we commonly know them today, were *not* the original law code. The famous story of Moses receiving the laws on two tablets of stone is another of those examples where tradition has telescoped developments that took many years and attached the result to a dramatic legend about a popular hero.

A second fact which we can put negatively is that all of the Old Testament law was not original with the Hebrews. We have not yet arrived at a period so advanced in Judaism that we find enduring and unique contributions. Archeologists have discovered close similarities between Hebrew law and earlier law codes of the Babylonians and Assyrians, among other nations of even greater antiquity than these Hebrews. Here again, in these similarities, we see that the life and culture and religion of these Hebrews, in this earliest period, were all a result of assimilation, of borrowing, of synthesis.

There is, however, one stratum of this early law which, if not the earliest of all Hebrew law codes, is among the first. A brief analysis of it will give us some idea of the nature of Yahweh worship, if not at its very beginnings then still sufficiently near the period we have been discussing to enable us to see what Yahweh expected of these Hebrews with whom he had just entered into a covenant.

This code appears in the 34th chapter of the Book of Exodus. While ten laws are discernible in this passage, it is unlikely that every verse of the chapter comes from the same period. These early laws were probably changed and amended many times, even as our laws are today. And in this 34th chapter of Exodus, probably three laws are older than the rest and comprise the original obligations in this particular code.

The first reads: *"All that openeth the womb is mine."* This is probably a reference to the sacrifice of the first born — probably including human sacrifice. Later on, changes were made in Yahwism — largely as a result of the Prophetic influence, which allowed for the redemption of the first-born of man. The sacrifice of first-born animals probably continued for a long time.

The whole story of Abraham, who was prevented from sacrificing his son Isaac by the last-minute intervention of an angel, is probably a legend, added at a later period, after human sacrifice had been officially replaced by a redemption-offering as a substitute for the sacrifice of the first-born. Such legends were frequently devised, linking them with one of the early Patriarchs, in order to validate a tradition for some change or evolution which a more enlightened age attempted to introduce.

But human sacrifice of the first-born was probably a part of this early Yahweh worship, and the practice continued for a long time, for we find the late literary Prophets protesting against its continuance.

Again, you must remember that we have been dealing with primitive people. They did not dream up a universal moral religion out of a vacuum. They had to live through the experiences of several hundred years which would develop such a religion, normally, out of their historic experiences. If they practiced human sacrifice of the first-born, it was because that was a common practice among many people of that time.

Then the second of the commandments: "*Neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left unto the morning.*"

This passage seems to indicate that the Passover was the primary festival in this religion in which we find the earliest origins of Judaism.

Scholars believe that the Passover festival came in the spring, as it now does, at a time when the flocks of these desert nomads gave birth to new offspring. Since these flocks were the principal capital and wealth of these pastoral tribes, any increment to them would be an occasion for a festival of thanksgiving and sacrifice.

This earliest Passover festival was not the same as the "Feast of Unleavened Bread." Obviously, the "feast of unleavened bread" reflects more of an agricultural civilization. Eventually, when these Israelites found their way into Canaan and became farmers instead of herdsmen, their religion changed accordingly. In Canaan, in the spring of the year, they found a grain-harvest festival.

The ceremony of this Canaanite agricultural festival seems to have included clearing out the last remnants of the old crop

and then, having accomplished that, making cakes or unleavened bread out of the first gatherings of the new crop and using these cakes or unleavened bread as a sacrifice of some kind. This ceremonial, unleavened bread may have been prepared right in the fields, as the first of the crop was harvested, accounting for its unleavened character.

What we have here, then, is the earliest form of the separation of the leavened (representing the old crop) from the unleavened (representing the new crop) which still distinguishes the Passover festival.

Eventually, there came about a synthesis or merging of the desert festival of the lamb and the agricultural festival of the unleavened cakes. This assimilation followed the pattern of assimilation with Canaanite ways in the life of these Hebrew people. It took place gradually, over an extended period of time.

The Canaanitish feast of unleavened bread was combined with the desert Passover. The ceremony of the unleavened bread was fused with the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.

There is an interesting passage in the 23rd chapter of the Book of Leviticus which reports this jointure of the two festivals midway in the transition period. As this passage reports the status of the two festivals, they still retained some separateness, although they were observed on consecutive days. The Leviticus account, which comes many years after the record in Exodus 34, says, "*. . . on the fourteenth day of the month at dusk is the Lord's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread. . . .*"

Here we see a clear example of religion in the making; of the fusing of the early desert practice with the more recent contacts with Canaanite life.

Finally, there is the third commandment to be found in this first law-code in Exodus 34: *"Thou shalt not seethe the kid in its mother's milk."* You must not take the kid, kill it and eat it, boiled in the milk of its own mother. This injunction is particularly interesting because this is the only Biblical authority for the laws of Kashruth (Kosher) which, in Orthodox Judaism, prevent the mixture of milk and meat. Actually, it says only that one should not boil a kid in the milk of its *own* mother. The later rabbis, through interpretations in the Talmud devised at periods when they wanted to make Jews and the religion of Judaism as different from all other religions as possible, developed out of this text the idea that you must not put *any* meat into *any* milk.

These three injunctions, then, sacrifice of the first-born, observance of the Passover and the prohibition against boiling a kid in the milk of its mother, together with the rite of circumcision, probably comprised the original, or at least were among the earliest, requirements of the religion of this desert god about whom Moses had learned from his Midianite father-in-law.

This is the outline of a fairly primitive religion, with one god, associated with a desert way of life. This is not yet monotheism, which means one God for all humanity. These Israelites or Hebrews would never have claimed that theirs was the only god in the world; it was just *their* god. This is called henotheism, which means this god for me and any number of gods for anybody else. We are not yet at the stage of any elevated, prophetic concept, either of God or of religion.

It would, nevertheless, be inaccurate to minimize the contribution made by Moses which, for his time, was of outstanding historic significance.

It is certain that he expanded the influence and increased the numbers of people in Yahweh worship. Whether or not Yahweh was an entirely new god to the Hebrews who had been in Egypt or whether, as seems more probable, Yahweh had once been their god and had been forgotten during the Egyptian experience, it is certain that, from the time of Moses and after, the career of Yahweh maintained an ascendancy in the lives of these people.

It is also probable that Moses infused Yahweh and his worship with new values that, while still a long way from an ethical, moral, and universal religion, represented some advance over the values previously associated with this god.

We do not, as a matter of fact, know too much about the character of this god or the worship associated with him immediately prior to the Moses period. Farther back in history, some scholars believe that Yahweh was a nature god; perhaps a god of the storm. A number of Biblical passages seem to confirm this opinion and indicate that something of this ancient memory continued to be associated with Yahweh even during the historical periods we have been surveying in this résumé of the origins of the Hebrew tribes.

One such passage, reflecting a storm god, may be found in Judges 5, verses 4–5: *"Lord, when Thou didst go forth out of Seir, When Thou didst march out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, the heavens also dropped, Yea, the clouds dropped water. The mountains quaked at the presence of the Lord, even yon Sinai at the presence of the Lord, the God of Israel."*

Some scholars believe that the name Yahweh itself derives originally from an ancient Arabic verb meaning "to blow."

Whatever Yahweh's origins, however, to the Hebrews, he

began to take on the attributes mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Moreover, Moses succeeded in making Yahweh the most important god to a number of these Hebrew tribes. It is well to remember that neither at the time of Moses nor for some period thereafter is it improbable that Yahweh was the *only* god of these Hebrew tribes. Each tribe may well have had its own tribal god. Yahweh, in a way, became the god of the confederacy which Moses probably succeeded in organizing. Yahweh was perhaps the god invoked by these tribes at times of crisis, particularly military crises, when some unity was needed or wanted. After the crisis was over, the confederacy probably weakened and Yahweh was probably at least partially eclipsed again by the tribal gods. Yet, over a period of centuries, Yahweh became the focal point about which a precarious larger confederation of tribes was organized until, in the time of David, the confederacy included both the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribes of Judah.

But, even then, local and tribal gods existed, along with Yahweh. Solomon's reign was notable for the large number of "foreign" gods whose shrines were admitted to the united kingdoms.

It is important therefore to realize that Moses' contribution was significant, even though the Yahweh worship of his time was a long way from a Judaism that would endure for millennia. Moses' contribution was important for his time and as a chapter in the evolution which is the historical and understandable record of the origins of Judaism. This is the human record of human beings who were children of their day and whose religion and moral outlook was the product of their age.

It is with such a god, great enough to rouse them to leave the bondage of Egypt and to set out in the course that led them to infiltrate Canaan, that these Hebrews made a covenant. There was no smashing, decisive conquest of Canaan, as we have seen.

There was infiltration — the absorption, mixture, and intermixture of one culture with another. There was no exclusive loyalty to Yahweh, and in the course of this infiltration there was acceptance of some of the pagan agricultural rites which existed in Canaan in conflict with the equally pagan but simple and rigorous moralities of desert life. Out of this conflict there germinated the really distinctive and, I think, the only unique phenomenon in the history of Judaism — the Prophets and the prophetic idea of Judaism.

3

MEET THE REBELS WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

THE LITERARY Prophets exerted an impact on the history of human thought far beyond Judaism itself. A period of five or six hundred years has passed between the time of the Moses story and the time when the first of these Prophets appeared. It is important to realize that during this period of five or six centuries the Israelitish people completed the process of assimilation. What had developed — we are concerned mostly with their religious development — was an amalgam of the early desert religion with many ideas and practices which these people had taken over from the religions or other people with whom they had come into contact. The result, essentially, was a usual religious development for their time. There was little about the religion of these Israelites that was either much better or much worse than the religions of their neighbors.

For example, such institutions as sacred prostitution existed among these people. This was a common practice in primitive religions, in which men were concerned with their gods not in a moral sense but only as the gods affected the productivity of the soil and the fertility of the animals which they herded and which were their capital. An elaborate temple had been built to house the "presence" of Yahweh. An intricate and elaborate service, calling for extravagant sacrifices and a priestly caste schooled in the complexities of offering

these sacrifices, had been created. Since the major shrines were parts of the paraphernalia of the Oriental royalty which had emerged with the passing of years, the priestly functions involved playing the politics of the generally despotic tyrannies under which the people lived. Part of the priestly prerogative seems to have been the privilege or opportunity to buy and sell and barter. Little indeed was left, at least at a superficial glance, of the simple desert religion. Yahweh himself had been largely obscured or substantially eclipsed by a myriad of local gods (called Ba'alim) who were indigenous to the agricultural civilization of Canaan. There was little connection between religion and such moral values as justice, truth, and righteousness. While the entire civilization of these Israelites had a surface glitter of Oriental splendor, the masses of people were but little better than slaves.

EMERGENCE OF THE PROPHETS

Now, suddenly, in the midst of this corrupt civilization, which was on the brink of collapse, there emerged a group of individuals who began to protest against the flagrant social inequities. That protest was phrased with moral indignation and spoken in the name of a God of justice and righteousness. The result was to provide the chapter of real genius in Judaism. In this protest against social injustices combined with lofty moral values related to a universal God, Judaism took its place as one of the great spiritual forces of mankind.

I am speaking now of a *group* of men. One may account for genius in an individual. But we are dealing now with a group who came on the stage of history in such succession that they made an incomparable impression upon the history of thought

and upon mankind generally. These men represent a period of *almost* inexplicable genius. There is some basis in the history of these Israelites recounted so far for explaining partially the things which these Prophets said and did. Two stories which are pretty generally known from Biblical literature will illustrate their historic antecedents and give some clue to the lineage of their ideas.

When King David decided he wanted to marry Bathsheba, he cynically eliminated her husband by ordering him to a very dangerous place in the battles which were being waged between David's armies and the Ammonites. Subsequently David married the woman he had coveted. According to the Biblical text, a man by the name of Nathan emerged, who told the King a parable about a rich man coveting a poor man's sheep. Without revealing, of course, that it was a parable, Nathan asked for the King's judgment. When the King pronounced the judgment, condemning the rich man, the Prophet related his parable to David's act and said to the King, *"Thou art the man."* Here was a man in the King's own court who castigated the king for his immorality. That was more than a commonplace in the days of absolute despots in Oriental courts nearly a thousand years before Jesus.

A second story is related of David. Having accomplished the final unification of these early Israelitish tribes, he decided — as have many other warriors — that he was going to become a benefactor of civilization. One of the things he wanted to do was to build a temple, a very elaborate edifice to his god. He was the King of this country, an absolute monarch. Yet he was told by a Prophet, *"You are not to build a temple for this god."* This Prophet said to him in the name of God, *"When you were in the desert you did not have elaborate temples and elaborate priesthoods."*

Some years after the time of David, when the Israelites had split into a northern kingdom of Israel and a southern kingdom of Judah, one of the northern kings, Ahab, had a similar experience. He decided that he wanted to own the vineyard of a man whose property adjoined the royal estate. Ahab himself had asked the owner of the vineyard to give it to him. The owner, Naboth, refused. Ahab was disturbed and the Bible says he was "sullen and displeased."

Ahab had a wife, Jezebel, who lacked even Ahab's sketchy scruples, and she proceeded to "frame" Naboth by writing letters to prominent people accusing him of "cursing God and the King." Naboth was "tried" and stoned, and the way was apparently cleared to confiscate the property.

There was in Ahab's court a counterpart of the Prophet Nathan who had challenged David's authority. Ahab's moral opponent was Elijah, and when Elijah heard of the crime against Naboth he went to Ahab and said, *"In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."*

The parallel to the Nathan-David story is complete, in that Ahab was impressed with the moral authority of Elijah and accepted his rebuke. The Bible says again that the King *"rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his flesh and fasted."*

CHALLENGE TO SOCIAL CORRUPTION

These three references offer partial clues to some historical explanation of the character of the Literary Prophets. There probably existed in these people a strain of the simplicity of desert life. There is no entirely satisfactory explanation of why a monarch as powerful as David felt that he had to listen at all to a man who challenged the whole basis upon which he

operated his elaborate Oriental court. There may have been in David's mind, and in the minds of people who were associated with him, a dim realization of, and respect for, a stubborn desert strain of simple morality and social justice that came from somewhere in the background of the Israelites. If that explanation is satisfactory – and it should not be argued too vigorously that it is – it is a natural and historical reason for the Prophetic challenge to a morally corrupt civilization.

One other word of explanation. The word "Prophets" is an unhappy term to describe these men. Everyone who has ever talked about these men has called them Prophets. Actually they were not prophets in the sense that they could predict the future in specific terms. They did not pretend to be seers or fortune tellers. They had no more conception of specific events that would happen the day after tomorrow than had David or any of the people who consulted with them or listened to them. But somehow or other they came to the basic belief, which runs all through the things they said, that they were living in a civilization which was demoralized and corrupt. Their concern was not theological but with the economies of their society and the tyrannies which people had to suffer. Most of the people at that time, the kings included, believed that, if they offered such and such a sacrifice on such and such a day and with the priest wearing such and such a robe, they were maintaining a firm relationship between a special god and the people, and they were invulnerable. No harm could come to them. This was a very materialistic interpretation of religion. Religion had nothing to do with the social moralities or immoralities of the day. This popular conception was simply the extension of the idea we have noted before. The test of a god or a religion lay not in moral values or personal,

spiritual satisfaction. The efficacy of a god and a religion was measured in the tangible, physical inventories: good crops, good flocks, good health, victories in war.

Despite the apparent abundance of these material blessings, however, the Prophets believed that this society was decadent and about to be destroyed. Whatever the glitter of its shell, it was internally rotted and diseased.

This perception, which the Prophets felt compelled to articulate, was a revolutionary concept in human affairs. To proclaim to people that, despite obvious material blessings and meticulous observance of the formalities of religion, they were doomed to catastrophe and lacking the favor of God was an unheard-of social philosophy.

The Prophets believed that it did not matter whether all of the people offered all of the sacrifices. By this time, five hundred years removed from their desert origins, thousands of sacrifices were required to obtain what was popularly considered to be "the grace of God." This is one of the things which the Prophets attacked.

It is exceedingly important to realize that the Prophets did not consider themselves prophets. The word "Prophet" has an unctuous, pontifical, or unrealistic meaning which detracts from the virility of these men and from their real impact on civilization. There is one passage which makes clear the distinctions between these men and the men who were commonly called Prophets.

The conventional prophets practiced divination. They were, in addition, usually professionals; that is, they were paid by someone who considered them specialists, technicians in the art of divining the will of the gods. If a king, for example, wanted to wage a war, he did not count only his men and his

armor. In addition, he asked of his god whether the day after tomorrow or the day after that was the propitious day to do battle; and whether or not he would be successful. It can be imagined, therefore, that if a king was ready to make war there were not very many of these hireling prophets who would say to him, "Don't do it." It was their business to be simply the "yes men" of the king.

Amos was once called a "prophet" by one of these court prophets who did not like Amos's candid criticisms of the King of Israel. You may read in the seventh chapter of the Book of Amos: *"Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-El sent to Jeroboam, King of Israel, saying, 'Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the House of Israel: The land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, "Jeroboam shall die by the sword and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land." ' Also Amaziah said unto Amos: 'O thou seer, go flee thee away into the land of Judah [Amos was speaking in the northern kingdom, Israel; Judah was the southern Kingdom] and there eat bread and prophesy there. But prophesy not again any more at Beth-El, for it is the king's sanctuary and it is a royal house.' Then Amos answered Amaziah and said, 'I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; and the Lord took me as I followed the flock and the Lord said unto me, 'Go prophesy unto the people of Israel.' "*

Right or wrong, the moral conclusions to which the Literary Prophets came were reached in ways other than the mumbo-jumbo of divination, commonly practiced by seers and professional prophets of their day. It would be largely futile to attempt to dissect the essential genius of these men, beyond their attachments to the simple desert moralities which stub-

bornly persisted among these Israelitish peoples. Combined with this tradition was the ability of these men to see something of the historic forces that were moving through their era. But their contribution to religion lay in their ability to relate this tradition of morality and their perception of historic forces to meaningful and universal spiritual values.

It is here that we find their incomparable genius and some explanation for the fact that, through religion, the moral values which they perceived have become the foundation stones of Western civilization. With these Prophets, Judaism left the level of a religion attached to cult and formula and became a faith in moral values, demonstrable in the history of man and acceptable as rational truths for society.

Unless the difference between these two types of religion is understood and appreciated, the whole point of the tremendous achievement of these Prophets will be missed and it will be impossible to understand their place and influence in history.

AMOS AND JEREMIAH

It was a very dramatic setting, in most instances, in which these men spoke. They did not have congregations to which they could send out bulletins and call people together. They had to take advantage of ready-made gatherings of people. Amos, for example, probably came to the national sanctuary at Beth-El in the northern kingdom, on the Passover or on one of the other great national festivals when the temple and its courtyards were jammed with people. That was the only way in which he could obtain an audience. Then, in the midst of that assembly, gathered to practice the rites of a materialistic

religion, Amos stood and said, among other things: *"I hate, I despise your feasts and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer Me* [*God*] *burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them. Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs* [*meaning the liturgy chanted by the Levites in the temple*] *and let Me not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream."*

And then one of those passages which give a tiny clue as to the source of this tradition: *"Did ye bring unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O House of Israel?"* This is probably a rhetorical question; but you see the reference to the simplicity of the life and the method of worship associated with the old desert religion.

Some years later, Jeremiah spoke similar words to the people of the southern kingdom of Judah. Standing in the courtyard of the Temple in Jerusalem, he said: *"Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. But trust ye not in lying words saying: 'The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these'* [*meaning the buildings and courtyard, etc.*]. *Nay, but if ye thoroughly amend your ways and doings, if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor, if ye oppress not the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth, glory in this: that I am the Lord which exercises loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."*

In listing these virtues, Jeremiah did so without the unctu-

ousness of politicians and preachers today. This was the first time that men talked of religion in terms of opposition to the oppression of other people and in terms of social values and human relationships. In the earlier period none of these considerations mattered. All that proved the validity of a religion was whether a people was able to harvest its crops and win its wars. If it failed in these things, they cast around for another god, as the Israelitish tribes probably had done when they were in slavery in Egypt. Here, however, was a man who began to talk of religion in terms of the relationships of man to man, and of man to society: *"If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever. Behold ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely and offer unto Baal [the general name given to the agricultural gods in Canaan] and walk unto other gods whom ye have not known and come and stand before me in this house whereupon my name is called and say, 'We are delivered.'"*

In passages like these, moral religion is already full-blown. Privilege entails responsibility. Material security is not unrelated to moral strength. The stability of a society cannot be measured "by bread alone."

It detracts nothing from Jesus to realize that Jeremiah spoke as bitter a condemnation of the whole idea of sin — not alone personal sin but also social sin — and of the sheer materialistic, automatic processes of sacrifice for redemption followed by the people and the priests saying together, *"We are delivered,"* as Jesus ever uttered. This is the first time in history that men

dared to say this. Jesus had the precedent of these men before him.

THE IDEA OF JUSTICE

And then, of course, from the prophecy of Micah, which is probably the most famous passage in the spirit of those just cited: *"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"* [*Notice here the reference to human sacrifice, which apparently still persisted.*] *"It hath been told thee, O man, what is good and what the Lord doth require of thee; only to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God."*

We are very much inclined today to dismiss as platitudes these passages and such ideas. There is no politician, no preacher, hardly anyone who tries to catch the ear of the public today, who does not in one way or another plagiarize some of these words and, for the most part, prostitute them. The Prophets were the first in history to use language and to express ideas of this kind. And at that time in the evolution of man they were iconoclastic, revolutionary ideas.

So much for the general principles. There are some interesting references to social implications. Amos, for example, talks about very minute relationships – and in more than general terms. *"Hear this, O ye that would swallow the needy and destroy the poor of the land, saying 'When will the new moon be gone that we may sell grain?* [*meaning that they are*

impatient, of course, for the religious holiday to be over. Amos was not particularly impressed with holidays. But the people were primarily concerned only with the materialistic aspects of their lives.] *And the Sabbath that we may set forth corn? Making the ephah small and the shekel great* [*the ephah was a measure—a reference to cheating*] *and falsifying the balance of deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes; and sell the refuse of the corn?' The Lord hath sworn by the pride of Jacob, 'Surely I will never forget any of these words.'* "

That is a pretty specific condemnation of certain economic injustices that Amos saw in society. Amos condemns them in association with God and therefore adds the necessity for eliminating them to the concept of religion which the Prophets held. Here is the infusion into religion of ethical-social concepts. We are not dealing any longer with a religion related to the proper sacrifice on the proper Thursday by the proper priest dressed in the proper robes. These things were condemned as being utterly unessential and even, as a matter of fact, as being a detraction from what the Prophets considered to be religion. Religion is now interpreted in terms of ethical values and human relationships.

The point was made earlier in this discussion of the Prophets that it was the succession of these men, in history, that provides the unique character of this period in the development of Judaism. No one of them made the complete contribution of what we call "Prophetic Judaism" or "Prophetic religion."

Had any single man accounted for this revolution in religious thinking, it would have been a less imposing historical phenomenon. Such religious geniuses have existed in other religions, either as their founders or reformers.

The distinctive character of this prophetic phenomenon in Judaism, however, is that it did not rise and flower and culminate in the vision of a single personality. It was, itself, a process of evolution; of gradual accretion and building, in which one of these personalities added to what had been conceived before, and the whole construction of this most fundamental alteration in religious thinking spread over a period of perhaps a century and a half or two centuries and through eight or ten known personalities and perhaps other anonymous ones.

This is a most significant fact. For it reveals that a *human* grouping for spiritual values was involved. To whatever extent the things these men conceived are truth, they are truth which men wrung from the perplexities of life and the universe. There are undoubtedly many who would find it more comforting and exciting to believe that all of these truths were bestowed upon men, or preferably upon a single man, by some supernatural process. Such an interpretation is always possible in religion. It is certainly the impression most readily seen in the usual accounts of revelation.

Strangely enough, however — and I believe the personal histories of the Literary Prophets themselves tend to support the preference — I prefer to see these men who changed the world as struggling upward, in the grim, anguished searching for truth that is man's most distinguished spiritual identification. To some, at least, seeing these men humanly reaching up for a moral God is a more thrilling historic drama than seeing them as sainted targets for a God reaching down.

It is not all whimsy that leads to that preferential reading of the history of these times. A careful study of the heritage left to us by each of these men will indicate that each added some

new ethical, moral concept to the spiritual revolution which was eventually to immortalize them, as a group, in human history.

Amos, who was chronologically the first of these prophets, conceived of God in the austerity of almost absolute justice and righteousness. The words he speaks to an Israel full of social injustice and unrighteousness, where "the poor" are sold "for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes," are probably the bitterest, most satirical, unrelievedly scathing uttered by any of these men.

Amos's view of justice is something so absolute and unqualified that he tells the people of Israel that God is standing with a plumb line in His hand, measuring them. Apparently the deviation from justice is so great that God "will not again pardon them any more."

The searing, slashing bitterness of Amos is understandable against the corruption he saw all about him. Yet, of itself, it could not qualify as a religion. No human being could have met the taut moral standards of Amos's God with a plumb line in His hand. Somewhere, before this vision of justice that saturated Amos's convictions about the universe could become part of a human instrumentality of faith and belief, it required the relief of mercy, love, and forgiveness.

Whether by a rational process or simple accident, the next in line in this prophetic succession of reaching for the truth supplied that which Amos's relentless moral judgment lacked. It was Amos's successor, Hosea, who added to the understanding of God the mitigating quality of love.

Hosea was no less conscious than Amos of the moral decadence in Israel, upon which he looked a few short years after the first of these Prophetic figures. Hosea too spoke bitterly

of an Israel that put great store by gods and practices that were considered insurance policies for uninterrupted, material prosperity, while ignoring the moral and ethical principles which, with Amos, he considered indispensable to society. Israel, according to Hosea, is "a harlot" who has said, *"I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink."*

And for this, the prophet says Israel shall be punished. "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." Israel, he says, will "become among the nations as a vessel wherein there is no value."

Here, so far, is Amos's perception of God as justice, moving relentlessly, straight as a plumb line, through history. But, with Hosea, this is not all.

After justice has had its day, Hosea sees an end to the punishment. Man, after all, is not God. The chasm between the justice for which Amos cried and the best that human frailty could be expected to achieve had to be bridged by love and forgiveness.

It is interesting, by the way, that Hosea sees the process of redemption related to the wilderness, and we find here that stubborn strain of desert nostalgia which probably explains so much of this Prophetic tradition. The Prophet sees God "alluring" Israel and "bringing her into the wilderness" where He will "speak tenderly unto her." And Israel *"will respond there, as in the days of her youth and as in the day when she came out of the land of Egypt."*

Then, Hosea goes on to say, God will "betroth" Israel unto Himself "forever"; "in justice and righteousness" God will "betroth" Israel unto Himself.

But also "in loving kindness and in compassion and faithfulness" will Israel then be "betrothed" unto God.

Here then is Hosea's contribution to the concept of God. To Amos's justice and righteousness, this second of the great Prophets added the requisite love and compassion. The God-idea was evolving. To the inexorability of punishment there was added the hope of mercy and love between God and man and, therefore, in the religion-for-life of these prophets, between man and man.

But this still was not a God of power and majesty. It stood far above the mechanistic paganisms of the usual shrines that honeycombed Israel's religious life. But it was still short of a God-idea of high purposefulness. The god composed of the dreams of an Amos and a Hosea might have brought alternate fear and compassion to men, on a level above mere hunger and defeat or luxury and victory. But it remained for Isaiah to add to the concept of God those ennobling and majestic proportions that have lifted men above themselves.

Isaiah had seen the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel predicted by Amos and Hosea. Isaiah himself was a citizen of the southern kingdom of Judah. And he saw the Assyrian power that had eliminated Israel from the stage of history, standing at the threshold of Jerusalem, capital of the south, and threatening that nation with destruction as well.

Isaiah seems to have been an aristocrat, a confidant of kings, and to have enjoyed the advantages of an education. The works ascribed to him reveal some highly astute political deductions on the international situation of his time. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that this man should have brought to the prophetic movement a somewhat more exalted

philosophical approach than Amos or Hosea. Isaiah's personal background may largely account for a broader vision of the God-idea, by means of which he could integrate and make sense out of all that he saw and knew in the turbulent historical events of his lifetime.

In any event, to the justice of Amos and the love of Hosea, Isaiah brought new meaning and amplification to the "holiness" of God. This was not a holiness that was taboo or related to divination. This was a holiness of majesty and impressiveness, that saturated the universe and human life. It was something of the dignity of meaningfulness and purposefulness in history and human experience. It was something of orderliness in the moral chaos that prevailed generally.

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory," the Prophet exclaims.

In the majesty of that vision of God, filling the world, the Assyrians, the Medes, the Egyptians, are instruments only. They are none of them ends in themselves. The justice of Amos and the love of Hosea may be the reasons why history moves often in ways inscrutable to man. To Isaiah, these were the motive powers which reflected God moving through history, "shaking the world out of her place."

Without Isaiah's contribution, it is possible that God might have appeared no more than a dialectic alternation between the justice of Amos and the love of Hosea. Isaiah's was a philosopher's vision of God. His expansive concept of holiness gave purposefulness and a reason for sustained faith in the human values Amos and Hosea had predicated as essential to worship of God.

As if anticipating that history might find Isaiah's majestic holiness too distant, too austere, as history might have found

Amos's unqualified justice too unyielding, a successor to the historian-philosopher Isaiah brought the God-idea back again to the intimacies of man's life. Jeremiah saw the collapse of Judah, as Isaiah had seen the collapse of Israel and the threat to Judah.

Perhaps a century and a quarter or so after Isaiah, Jeremiah added, to all that had gone before, the ingredient of personal, intimate relationship between God and men.

God was Amos's justice and Hosea's love and Isaiah's holiness. But God was not all of these things moving remotely and majestically only in the mighty sweeps of the history of nations. God was also these things in the crevices ad recesses of the individual spirit. God was not only historic justice, love, and holiness. God was human, living justice, love, and holiness. God did not dwell only in remote holiness. God was "indwelling" in man's spirit and conduct.

So Jeremiah could ask, rhetorically, *"Am I a God near at hand . . . and not a God afar off?"* And then, in answer to his own question, the Prophet asked again, *"Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?"* Does not God fill earth, as well as heaven, Jeremiah asks.

Out of personal experience, the great prophet described how this "indwelling" of God affected him. *"My heart within me is broken. All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man and like a man whom wine hath overcome."* All this, Jeremiah says, is *"because of the Lord and His holy words."*

Since God was personal, intimate, the individual and his conduct became the concern of religion. Jeremiah's faith created the climax in this evolution out of tribalism. No more shall it be said, he declared, *"The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. But everyone*

shall die for his own iniquity. Every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge."

Justice, love, and sanctity were not only abstract social ideals or the responsibilities of nations. To the contributions of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, Jeremiah added the understanding of God in a personal, intimate sense with the logical corollary of individual, moral responsibility.

Here then is the moral structure, built stone by stone over perhaps a century and three quarters of time by this unique and historic movement. I repeat my conviction that this is the distinguishing, historic contribution of Judaism to civilization and mankind. To this, all that went before is but prelude. Little that is new has been added since.

These values are the indispensable prerequisites of our democratic way of life. They are the distinguishing characteristics, marking off our way of life from that of the totalitarians of history. They provide the formula which gives man the potentialities of being little less than the angels and which makes the God-idea, in its pure and uncluttered meaning, an "indwelling," working philosophy for man.

IDEA OF A UNIVERSAL GOD

But these enduring moral values are not the totality of the contribution of these men. They said that these values derived from God and were the manifestations and the demonstrations of the existence of this God, and that the practice of these values was worship of God. But, more than that, they said this God is not only the God of this people, Israel. These men conceived also the idea of a *universal* God, of one God

for all mankind; and these values, therefore, which represented this God, are universal values, applicable to all people.

Amos says: *" 'Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?' saith the Lord."*

Isaiah, even with a consciousness of a God of history, sees Assyria as the tool of a God Whose holiness and values are universal. If Israel bows from the stage of history because of corruption, and Judah's existence is threatened for the same reason, let not Assyria, the conqueror, fancy that it stands outside the operation of these same moral laws. Assyria is but "the rod of God's anger," according to Isaiah. God sends Assyria "against an ungodly nation."

This is the historian-philosopher's version of universalism. The absence of these moral values of God from the kingdoms of Israel and Judah accounts for their peril and collapse, and the same God uses Assyria as the instrument of punishment. It is not a different god. This is not a situation in which the god of Israel or of Judah is to be pitted against the gods of Assyria. The historic eventualities which Isaiah predicted were the work of One God, reaching into the life of the two Israelitish nations and Assyria, as well.

This Prophetic idea is a revolutionary advance over the days when victory in a war, or defeat, was considered a sign of greater or less potency in the gods of one of the people involved.

Jeremiah, true to his pattern of applying to intimate, personal problems these values which he and his colleagues had conceived, voiced his understanding of the universality of these values in still another way.

Faced with the imminence of the Babylonian exile, when large numbers of the people of the kingdom of Judah would

be taken captive, Jeremiah advised them that these values, epitomized in God, were as valid in Babylon as in Judah.

"Build ye houses and dwell in them [he tells the captives]. "And plant gardens and eat the fruit thereof. Take ye wives and beget sons and daughters and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands that they may bear sons and daughters, and multiply ye there and be not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I [God] have caused you to be carried away captive and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

But the most majestic vision of universalism was contributed by one who stood in the Prophetic tradition and to whom, as yet, no reference has been made. This man lived some time after Jeremiah, around 500 B.C. perhaps. Unlike the messages of his predecessors, his was a message of hope and regeneration. The Babylonian exile was about to come to an end as a result of the rising power of Cyrus of Persia. This Prophet knew that, if and when Cyrus conquered Babylon, the Judean exiles would be permitted to return, since it was Cyrus's policy to permit conquered peoples to live on their own territory as subjects.

We find the record of this prophecy in chapters 40–55 of the Book of Isaiah. Actually, we do not know the name of this later Prophet. Applying the principles regarding difference of style and subject matter pointed out in the first chapter as guideposts to scholars in their efforts to understand the various authorships of the Biblical texts, it was apparent that these chapters in the Book of Isaiah were not the product of the same person who had authored chapters 1–39.

As a result, scholars refer to chapters 40–55 as the writings

of Deutero-Isaiah, or of the Second Isaiah. We shall have to leave his identification at that.

However uncertain we may be of who this man was and what was his name, there is no mistaking the fact that in him we find a universal expression of religion that was unmatched until his time.

Why was the Judean captivity to be permitted freedom, this nameless Prophet wondered. He found the answer in service to all the nations; bringing them understanding of the universally applicable truths which Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah had invested in God. Speaking of people who may now properly be called Jews, the Prophet says, God has taken hold of their hand and kept them *"for a light of the nations. To open blind eyes; to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."*

Further, this Second Isaiah sees God as the God of all people. *"Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."*

Here is the flowering of the seed which Moses planted at Horeb-Sinai when he conceived of the Midianite god finding it possible to send his "presence" with the Israelitish tribes into Canaan. Only now, much more is involved. For in this great anonymous Prophet we find not only that this God can go with Israelitish tribes wherever they may go; we find not only, as Amos found, that the principles of justice were applicable to the Ethiopians as to Israel; we find also that all peoples are invited to worship this God and live by these values. For the blessings and beneficences of this God, his "salvation," according to the Second Isaiah, "may be unto the end of the earth."

And while it is not properly a part of the works of the Second

Isaiah, in chapter 56 of the Book of Isaiah we find the famous passage epitomizing this universalism: *"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."*

It is not surprising that these ideas came as heresy and as a revolution to people who had been taught to believe that worship of God was specified by priests in the form of elaborate ritual and sacrifice; that that God was *their* God and no other people could be quite as good or acceptable in God's eyes as they were.

That their God could be the God of other people too, and that the same moral values would be operative in the society of other peoples as in the society of the Israelites was something entirely revolutionary.

The idea of one god for a people was not the contribution which Jews made. There had been other peoples who had had that idea before. The idea of one god for *all* peoples representing a single standard morality with one set of moral values applying to all peoples – this was the completion of the revolution in religious thinking which these men brought about.

One final aspect of the careers of these Prophets should be mentioned before this brief recountal of their place in history is closed. Like all people ahead of their times, these men had little following among their contemporaries. On the contrary, they were abused, vilified and persecuted. The contemporaries of these Prophets had no idea of the genius of these men. They did not know what these men were talking about. The Prophets were revolutionaries and were treated as such; Jeremiah was thrown into the pits. They lived embittered and persecuted lives. Jesus was persecuted later by a combination of people who did not understand him and by some who did,

together with the political powers that did not want him to have the freedom to preach.

THE RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION

These, then, are the two contributions which the Prophets made. They transformed the idea of religion from materialistic, pagan ritualism practiced formalistically in return for material blessings, into moral and ethical concepts to be practiced – and this is incidentally one distinctive characteristic of Judaism – in terms of actual living and human relationships. In addition to that, there was the expansion of the idea of a god beyond that of a tribal deity connected with one tribe or group of tribes by a very exclusive, mysterious covenant, which was understood only by a priestly caste, into a God-concept or the application of these same moral values to all peoples.

For the observance of this religion, one needed no priestly technician with specialized knowledge of how to reach God. One needed only "to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly." One needed only a sense of the eternal values these men perceived and a consecrated sense of the sanctity and holiness of these values in the history of man.

This is universalism. This is *ethical* monotheism, which is the unique contribution made by Judaism to human thought.

Those who are religiously devout and those who are not should recognize these values as the heart of all religion, in its most liberal and intelligent concept in the Judaism and Christianity of the Western World. Everything else – any formalistic additions to the established moral values – are the trappings of religion which I think any man is free to accept or to reject as he may please.

This was the message of Jesus, some 600 years after these men had lived, when he made a second effort to transform the thinking of men through the impact of these ideas upon their religions. We are still a very long way today from the realization of the truths which these men professed. But the completely majestic character of the ideas and of the way in which these ideas, as expressed by these men, have influenced the thinking of all generations which have come after them cannot be exaggerated, so completely revolutionary were they for the times in which they lived.

4

WHAT HAPPENED TO JUDAISM IN THE GHETTO?

The Prophetic revolt against tribalistic religion fell on deaf ears. The Prophets were ignored by the kings and were not understood by the masses of the people, all of whom continued the very evils against which the Prophets preached.

In the year 722 B.C. the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Assyria and in the year 586 B.C. the southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by Babylon. The collapse of this decadent social and religious order was, in a sense, historic proof of the truths the Prophets had uttered. They had told the people that it was not enough to follow the minute ritual practices of the sacrifice and to pay homage to the priesthood. These things, the Prophets said, do not preserve society; although the priests had taught that in this way God protected His people or tribe. On the contrary, according to the Prophets, God was a moral force. He represented certain moral laws that must operate in society. When those laws are not operative, no matter how many sacrifices are brought, there is no true worship of God. Since neither Israel nor Judah was a moral nation despite all the paraphernalia of religion, the civilization which they thought was protected by means of these ceremonials and rituals was doomed by the moral decadence that existed beneath the glittering surface of this ritualism.

BIRTH OF THE SYNAGOGUE

The destruction of the two kingdoms, particularly the southern kingdom of Judah, presented the first great crisis in Judaism, which by then was no longer Israelitism or Jahwism or however the primitive religion before the Prophets may be designated.

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, conquered the city of Jerusalem and carried off the leaders of the Kingdom of Judah in the year 586 B.C. In many ways these captives were faced with an intellectual and religious crisis. They had no sacrificial temple in Babylon. They no longer lived in the land which was supposed to be the special domain of their god. They believed that they could worship that god only in that land and at those shrines which had been set up in his name and with the help of priests who had been adept at all the rituals and mechanisms of pagan worship. The group taken captive to Babylon was faced not by choice but by necessity with the first practical test of the Prophetic message. Could they live under Jeremiah's injunction to "build houses . . . plant gardens and seek the peace of the city" which was their new home? Could they find faith, in that still-primitive day, in Micah's lofty vision of worship of God as "doing justice and loving mercy"? Was this a god who could be worshiped in Babylon as in Canaan, Judah, Israel, or Palestine? Could there be worship without all the paraphernalia of the temple and the priesthood?

These people soon found that they could worship God in Babylon, where they developed a new kind of religious expression. The Babylonian captivity, in its early period, is a rather obscure chapter. We do know that certain things must have happened, because when some of these people later returned

— some fifty or sixty years after the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem — they brought certain institutions out of captivity with them. We can only assume that those institutions were developed during the period of captivity.

One of these institutions may have been the first synagogue — not the synagogue as we see it today, but the germ out of which the idea of the synagogue came. Some scholars hold that the synagogue developed first in Palestine. In any event, its rise was definitely due to the Prophetic influence. We believe, therefore, that in Babylon they must have begun a religious service that had to do only with prayers, with the recitation of some of the Psalms that were composed in Babylon and which were poetic expressions of the Prophetic idea, and with a spiritual concept of God, of religion, and of religious worship. We know that in Babylon they began to read the Torah or Biblical law codes. When some of these exiles returned, they began to talk about the "Laws of Moses." They read and discussed them. Scholars assume that this practice began to develop in Babylon as a substitute for the sacrifices, the sacrificial temple, the priesthood, and all of the paraphernalia which did not exist in Babylon.

A class of readers or scholars or teachers began to take the place of the priesthood and was probably the earliest antecedent of the rabbi. They were not a caste based on birth and privilege. These early rabbis were a group of men learned in the law, who could read it, who could teach it and its implications, and who could, moreover, apply these implications to the altered life which these captives were living in Babylon. We can now begin to talk of these people technically and precisely as Jews. What was evolving was Judaism and a religion of living moral law.

Here is the spiritual foundation for a Judaism no longer

related to a specific land, no longer related to priesthood, but related only to human beings with certain convictions. With a Judaism of moral values, universal in scope and with a God no longer attached to land or tribe, these people could now become an integral part of the civilization to which they were taken as captives and there maintain their integrity in a religious sense. They could obey the injunction of Jeremiah.

The Babylonian captivity ended at about the year 538 B.C. (the conquest of Jerusalem took place in 586 B.C.) as a part of the wars of conquest of Cyrus of Persia.

Cyrus issued a decree permitting the exiles to leave Babylon and to return to Judah. We do not know how many of them actually took advantage of this opportunity. It is rather interesting, in view of the conflict between nationalism and universalism among Jews, to note that not all of them returned. The Biblical records of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell us about thirty thousand persons left Babylon and went back to Judah. The accuracy of these figures is doubtful. We do know, by subsequent events, that a great many Jews remained in Babylon and built there one of the enduringly great centers of Judaism. The Babylonian Talmud reflects this development. While there is much in it that modern Judaism has discarded, it played a more important part in Judaism than a Palestinian version of the Talmud.

SEPARATISM AND UNIVERSALISM

With the return of some Jews to the land of Judah, the first great historic conflict in Judaism emerged. Two men played important roles. One was Ezra, a scribe, who had apparently engaged in the reading of the law and its interpretation in

Babylon. Another was Nehemiah, who seems to have had a favored position at the Persian court and who returned as a kind of governor. He was to help rebuild whatever he could of the civilization that had been pretty well destroyed when the Babylonians had taken the Judeans captive.

Contrary to Jeremiah's injunction to mingle completely among those with whom they were going to live, Ezra and Nehemiah established rigorous decrees against Jews marrying into other tribes – particularly the Samaritans, who had lived in the land of Palestine or Canaan and who had fallen into particularly bad repute among Jews because they were continuing certain practices which Ezra and Nehemiah found contrary to their plans to rebuild a nation out of the people whose religion was Judaism. Ezra and Nehemiah established vigorous, separatistic laws. The pendulum swung back for those who returned to Judah – away from the universalism of the Prophets. Except for the fact that they had to make certain modifications, in terms of the synagogue which was now an institution in Jewish life, Ezra and Nehemiah tried to recreate as much as possible of the nationalistic character of Judaism and Jews.

It is important to observe, however, that since Jews had lived in another land under the influence of Prophetic Judaism, Ezra and Nehemiah had to resort to coercion and arbitrariness to create a nation again. It was at this point that the conflict between religion and nation began to take shape among Jews. And, as had been generally true throughout history, the proponents of "Jewish" nationalism called to their assistance the artifices of worldly power; the combination of religion and state.

But the impact of the Prophets was not entirely lost. It was

preserved in the synagogue, which now existed along with the whole set of restrictions and separatistic practices that Ezra and Nehemiah introduced.

And the tradition of resistance to state-enforced, restrictive religion which had played such a part in the history of Jews was born here. In later eras, the state-church combine that was defied was usually not the invention of Jews. But at these beginnings of the tradition the theocracy was the work of other Jews.

Some scholars also say that the Book of Ruth dates from this period and is intended as a challenge to the separatism and exclusivism of Ezra and Nehemiah. Whether or not this is true, the fact that some scholars argue this way illustrates the departure from the Prophetic tradition which set in at this time and the awareness of that departure among a liberal group. The magnificent universalism of the Book of Ruth as an answer to Ezra and Nehemiah demonstrates the general proposition that the Prophetic tradition continued to live.

In any event, it is out of this period that there stem the two traditions that have been at war in Judaism ever since.

Ezra and Nehemiah were concerned with the "peoplehood" of *Jews;* with their separateness; their nationalism. Their restrictive interpretations of Judaism were all designed to advance that viewpoint. They wanted to offset the integration that had taken place in Babylon and in Palestine during the years of captivity.

It has always appeared a little difficult to understand how far back in the process of accommodation or integration those who are zealous for separatism and segregation are prepared to go in their efforts to root out the one and leave the field uncontested for the other. For, unless you close your eyes and

pick an arbitrary point, ignoring the whole evolving history of Judaism, there is no place in its recorded history where it has not "assimilated," synchronized, integrated with the culture with which it was in most immediate contact. The idea of the purity of Judaism is as much nonsense as the idea of purity of any other philosophy in the career of living people. And the fear of assimilation, the artificial, coercive structures with which some would encumber Judaism, even to the extent of adding to it a separatist nationalism, are all departures from that which is really Judaism. These are all devices designed to insure the integrity of "the Jewish people," as Ezra and Nehemiah designed their theocracy. They are not primarily intended for preservation of Judaism as a living, intimate faith.

And against this tradition of separatism and segregation and emphasis on "the Jewish people," there is the prophetic tradition of universalism and emphasis on moral values, represented in an "indwelling" God.

The conflict took definitive shape at the period we are examining now, just after the end of the Babylonian captivity. Many will see in it, at this period, all the ingredients of the conflict that continues unabated today in the form of attitudes to Israel, Zionism, and a return to ceremonialism in American Reform Judaism.

It would be foolish to attempt to deny that the tradition of separateness does exist and that it has long antecedents in Judaism. What is so distressing is that so few people, Jews and others, know of the opposite tradition of universalism and understand its validity and antecedents. This lack of knowledge gives Jews a false sense of the value of what is sometimes called "Jewish unity." And the same lack of knowledge, aided

and abetted by this false value which some Jews attach to "unity," makes for serious misunderstandings about Jews on the part of others.

JESUS

I must add one intermediary word as a discussion of Jesus. In a technical sense he does not belong in this history of Judaism; and yet, to deal with this period and to say nothing about his place in this tradition is unthinkable.

Out of this conflict between the Prophetic school and the group which Ezra and Nehemiah dominated, there developed subsequent representatives of these two interpretations of Judaism. The Sadducees carried on the early priestly tradition and the revival of it under Ezra and Nehemiah. The other group was the Pharisees. The Pharisees represented the rabbinic tradition, the liberal tradition, the universal interpretation and application of Judaism to a changing civilization. The Pharisees developed the Mishnah, the Talmud, and subsequent law codes in Judaism. In principle, for their times, these represented a liberal religious spirit. They recognized the principle of adaptation, of evolution, of taking a law which had been set down one hundred or five hundred years before and constantly finding in that law some device or technicality that permitted later Pharisaic or rabbinic teachers to apply the law to new situations. It was a significant development. We boast today of precedents in our own legal system. These men constantly found precedents for altering and changing the moral law as it was specifically applied to the life of Jews in different times and under different conditions.

Eventually, this liberal Pharisaic movement split, as so

many historic liberal movements have done. There emerged liberal and reactionary divisions and schools of thought among the Pharisees themselves. The existence of the two groups is dramatized in the famous story of Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai.

A man went to both of these rabbis and asked to be told the meaning of Judaism "while he stood on one foot." Rabbi Shammai, who represented the legalistic, reactionary school, spurned the man, saying that he had spent a lifetime studying the history of Judaism. Hillel who — at least in the story — represented the liberal school, said, *"Do not unto others what you would not have others do unto you. This is the law, and all else is commentary."*

Hillel's statement is again in the spirit of the Prophets. It indicates that this split existed even in the Pharisaic school. Jesus' protest against, and criticism of, the Pharisees fits into this pattern at this point. Much is made of his attitude toward the Pharisees in the Gospels and elsewhere in the New Testament. Jesus attacked the reactionary group among the Pharisees. He himself had many friends among the liberals. I doubt if Jesus was learned in the intricacies of Jewish tradition. Apparently he was a man of the people. He spoke for the same Prophetic, liberal application of the principles of Judaism to the problems of his time as the earlier Prophets had done for their times.

THE ISSUE OF JESUS

Jesus added one thing to the religious concept which I think any competent, objective scholar would admit had not been added by any of the earlier Hebrew Prophets; that was a

warmth in terms of human, personal experience. Christianity speaks of it theologically as love.

The idea of love as Jesus brought it to the Judaism of his day is somewhat different from the quality of love of which Hosea spoke. In some way, not easy to define, the difference between the two reflects in some part the different emphasis between Judaism and Christianity even today. For Hosea spoke of love in a more abstract sense than the impression one derives from Jesus' use of the term. Neither Amos nor Hosea had behind him the deeply personal and intimate concept of God which Jeremiah contributed. Jesus did. This may account, to some extent, for the difference, and it is conceivable that if Jeremiah had been a less turbulent personality, able to look upon his times with something of the calm approach of Jesus, he might have approached this concept, which Jesus seems to have made as a distinct contribution to religious thought.

The very rational approach which I have tried to emphasize as the great contribution of the Prophets may have prevented them from interpreting their understanding of Judaism in the same warm, human, individualized sense. The individual soul or the individual personality was a principle with them. We find something of the softer, warmer application of the principle in some of the great Psalms. The 23rd Psalm, for example, is very close in tone and spirit to the temper of much of what we think of in relation to Jesus. But Jesus made this somewhat elusive quality into a working precept. Many of his denunciations of evils that he saw were as bitter and slashing as similar expressions of his forerunners in this tradition. But in the more positive expressions of his convictions he reveals a more consistent intimacy with the spirit of man, while the earlier Prophets, in their affirmations, may be said to

reveal more insight into, and speculation on, the nature of God.

This is not to compare or detract from Jesus or the earlier Prophets. Together — for they belong in the same tradition — they rounded out the process of raising man's spiritual sights from the tribalism to the sublime and enduring truths which are still at the very marrow of all civilized living.

That Jesus is essentially a part of this whole tradition of universalism is demonstrated by the fact that, for many years following his death, Jews were among his most devoted and ardent followers. The great historian Heinrich Graetz says of these people, "They deviated in no degree from the precepts of Judaism . . . [except] the belief they cherished that the Messiah had already appeared." Among this group were to be found James, the brother of Jesus, Simon Peter, and John, who became the pillars of Christianity.

In terms of interfaith understanding, these facts are important. For they prove that the fundamentals of both Judaism and Christianity are much the same. The differences are all secondary in character. It is not by whimsy that we speak correctly of this civilization as Judeo-Christian.

Judaism — even Orthodox Judaism — always has had a certain rationality and a certain abstractness carried to some extreme perhaps in Reform Judaism. In Christianity the center of the religion itself has been the warm, human personality of Jesus.

The great controversy about Jesus was not so much over the validity of the religious precepts that he discussed but whether or not he was the Messiah. The priestly, legalistic groups in Judaism succeeded in banishing Jesus. The group that considered him to be a great man and a leader of the people was

not much concerned with the theological question of whether or not he had ushered in the Messianic period. This theological problem led eventually to a kind of conspiracy between the priests and the Roman government which resulted in the death of Jesus. It is not fair to say that "the Jews" crucified Jesus. The priests and the Roman government worked hand-in-glove, because both wanted to be rid of him. Similarly, hundreds of years before Jesus, one king tried to be rid of Jeremiah, and another tried to liquidate Amos. Jesus was a theological heretic, though not a religious heretic in the sense of the Prophetic principles of Judaism. He was also a political heretic, in that he was stirring up unrest among the masses whom Rome wished to rule as a docile, conquered people. There was the normal, expected collaboration between the priests and the Roman government which resulted eventually in the crucifixion of Jesus.

We may now return to the two traditions of separatism and of universalism as they began to develop following the Babylonian exile and as they were carried on through the Sadducees and Pharisees and even through Jesus. In the year 70, Rome finally conquered the second Hebrew commonwealth. Jews were widely dispersed throughout the whole Roman Empire. This was the end of the so-called national period in Jewish life, except for its modern revival. Nothing that could be called a nation was left. Jews were taken into the Roman Empire as full citizens. They were respected. Their religion was respected. A great scholar, Dr. Solomon Zeitlin of Dropsie College, believes that Palestine itself was allowed a certain degree of autonomy in the Roman Empire because it was considered the *religious* center of Roman citizens of Jewish faith.

RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

Then Rome entered a period of decline. Toward the end of the third century, some of its imperial rulers began to look upon the pagan state religions of Rome as contributory factors to the growing decadence of the Empire. They hoped that, by introducing a more enlightened morality, they might still revive the glory that had once been Rome. In the year 323, the Emperor Constantine decided to grant Christianity toleration.

Here is another question mark in history. Legend has it — and I have no better authority — that Constantine considered both Christianity and Judaism as possibilities for the dominant religion of the Empire. Christianity had developed into a religion that was, to some extent, an amalgam of the principles of, and belief in, Jesus plus some of the doctrines that prevailed in the mystery religions of the people of the Roman Empire. There was nothing unusual in the process. Judaism had emerged centuries before out of a similar process of synthesis between the desert religion of the earliest tribes and the rites and practices of the Canaanitish people. George Foot Moore and other scholars take note of this development in Christianity and the beginnings of the divergence from Judaism by referring to Gentile Christians. This term designates a difference between these early Christian sects and the Jewish followers of Jesus. It is in these Gentile Christian groups that we find the antecedents of Paulinian Christianity and the beginnings of much of the Gospel which Paul took "to the Gentiles" in his indefatigable missions, born out of his unshakable conviction in the divinity of Jesus. Through faith in the divinity

of Jesus and belief that, in that faith, man found redemption from sin and the promise of immortality, Christianity appealed to the pagan world lost in its miasma of fear and death and the dismal and eternal existence to which mortals were doomed after death.

The legend goes that the Jews refused to make such concessions. They insisted upon the high absolute plane of morality which the Prophets had contributed to Judaism so many years before and which, to a very large extent, Jesus himself had maintained.

Jews also, according to the legend, insisted upon the centrality of the law as contrasted with the centrality of the personality of Jesus in these Christian sects. They insisted also on the concept of the unity of God as an absolutely cardinal and indispensable element of their faith in contrast to the idea of Jesus as a part of divinity. These were difficult chasms for the still pagan peoples of the collapsing Roman Empire to hurdle.

If the story is true, it is quite understandable why Christianity — or Paulinian Christianity — was selected by Constantine in preference to Judaism, and why Christianity therefore became the dominant religion of the Western world.

At this time, Judaism still claimed to be a universal religion. As a matter of fact, it had made a number of very important converts among the more enlightened people of the Roman Empire. The history which Josephus wrote of his visit to the city of Rome is probably a very authentic record, in which he talks about members of the Roman nobility who had been converted to Judaism. For one reason or another, they had become repelled by the paganistic religions which were generally practiced throughout the Empire. The frequently heard statement that Judaism is exclusively related to a so-called

"Jewish people" has nothing to do with the period in which Judaism was born. Judaism was a religion to which anybody could subscribe, whether or not he was born a Jew, whether or not he was born in Israel or Palestine. Creed, not race or nationality, was the hallmark of a Jew.

Another conflict was born with the promulgation of Constantine's Decree of Toleration in 323 and the resultant alliance of church and state. Both Judaism and the new state-backed Christian church claimed to be universal religions. There could not be two universal religions—at least in the mentalities of that time. Since Christianity had behind it the power of the state, it evolved by force of arms as *the* universal religion. Judaism was gradually driven back by a series of decrees enforced by the state and by the church itself, which increased in power during the Middle Ages. Judaism was forced to become a religion associated with only one group—a forcibly segregated group—called Jews. The church militant believed that it was divinely enjoined to pile upon Jews and Judaism all manner of disabilities for the refusal to accept the divinity of Jesus.

SEGREGATION AND GHETTO

And so we enter the period of medieval life and of the ghetto. Jews were reduced from people who were free citizens of the Roman Empire to the status of a segregated, separate, corporate group within the many cities of the Roman Empire, and in the nations which developed separately as the Roman Empire fell apart. These were not walled-in ghettos at first. The people were simply compelled to live in certain sections of the cities. By decrees of the church under penalty of death, Jews were

forbidden to become, in many instances, part of the civilization in which they lived, unless they gave up their Judaism. At this period of restriction against Jews, unlike the modern crusades conducted by Hitler and his antecedents in German racial thinking, religion was the password. In Rome, by converting from Judaism to Christianity, one could become a part of the Christian civilization which was backed by the state. But Christians usually suffered death if they attempted to convert from Christianity to Judaism. Judaism became a religion apart, a restricted religion limited to people who were also restricted and segregated.

Not alone did the church and state segregate Jews and make of them a separate people, with as many differentiations between Judaism and Christianity as it was possible to devise, but there was a resurgence in Judaism itself of the element that wanted that segregated kind of Judaism and Jews. In 1084, Jews approached the rulers of the city of Speyer, one of the Germanic principalities, and asked that a ghetto be set up. There are any number of examples of *Jewish* leaders — so called and probably self-elected, as they often are today — who approached the ruling authorities and asked that these segregations be imposed upon Jews.

MEDIEVALISM OF THE GHETTO

We have a very romantic and, to some extent, a tragically and disastrously distorted picture of the ghetto. I do think I shall never forget seeing a play several years ago which was produced by one of the Zionist groups. It was called "A Flag Is Born." Quentin Reynolds came on the stage in a prelude to this play and uttered sweet-sounding sentimentalities about

the Psalm-singing Jews in their romantic ghettos in medieval Europe. Of course the ghettos were not anything of the kind. They were little Jewish counterparts of the despotisms, the tyrannies, and the reaction which prevailed all over medieval, feudalist Europe. They did not come about entirely as a result of the persecution of Jews by this union of church and state, though it is important to remember that they originated there. But when the start was made, there were then — as there were in the time of Ezra and as there are today — those among Jews who clung to this national separatistic, tribal interpretation of Judaism. They were delighted to see this period of reaction and segregation and did everything they could to encourage it, increase it, and accelerate its development.

Here is an authoritative interpretation from Professor Salo Baron's three-volume history of the Jews. Baron is a "Jewish" nationalist. In contemporary life in America, Baron believes in "Jewish nationalism" and Jewish separatism. He is therefore not at all apologetic about advertising the ghetto as something desirable and sought-after by Jews themselves. And so he says, for example:

> A Jewish quarter in ancient Alexandria or Sardes, in medieval Cairo or Cordova, carried no connotation of inferiority. In fact, Talmudic rabbis and even more vigorously some Karaites [a sect in Jewish life at that time] insisted upon separatism on practical as well as ritualistic grounds.

Further, Baron says:

> In 1412 there was enacted in Portugal the first general law regulating ghetto life. Although adopted at the request of a nation-wide Jewish deputation, its main provisions were very harsh. . . . In Verona and Mantua the erection of the Ghetto walls was long after celebrated by the local community in an annual festival modeled after Purim.

Finally, speaking of a still later period, he says:

> Even in Poland, where the Jewish court had no right to inflict capital punishment, lynching — as an extralegal preventative — was encouraged by rabbinical authorities such as Solomon Luria.

There are many more examples. To understand such voluntary hankering for segregation it must be remembered that, lurking in the tradition of Judaism and of Jews, there it always a group which is delighted at any opportunity to restrict, segregate, and separate Jews. When the church-state combine emerged following the Constantine decree, those Jews who wanted power saw their golden opportunity to rise to power on the backs of other Jews. How they did it is a simple and understandable process. They controlled the charities to which Jews contributed. They purposely limited the number of houses which were available to Jews, because they could then control the lives of Jews by granting or refusing the right to rent these houses. They regulated the dowries which were given girls who were about to be married in the ghetto. Their power was absolute and there was nothing romantic about it — nothing sentimental or desirable. It drove Judaism back upon itself by buttressing the narrow legalistic interpretation as against the universalism of the Prophetic tradition.

Out of this ghetto period came all of the narrow, logic-chopping, inbred intellectual devotion to the Talmud. Judaism became wrapped in minutiae once again. What developed was a complex of medieval scholasticism that nobody could understand. There was no opportunity for the Jew to get the fresh air of the Renaissance and the Reformation which came to Europe, because the rabbinical and clerical powers that sat

on top of these ghettos did not want them to be liberalized. They did not want them to escape their control.

And yet, even with Jews and a church-state alliance against them, it would be inaccurate not to tell something of the story of men, here and there, who defied this combination in an effort to keep alive the liberal, Prophetic tradition. Much of that tradition that survived these Dark Ages in Judaism and the world was developed under Mohammedan influence in those European parts of the Mediterranean basin which experienced Mohammedan control for varying periods.

The names of philosopher-religionists who made such liberal contributions are many. But perhaps something of all of their stories may be summarized in a comment or two about Moses Maimonides, who is probably the best known.

Maimonides attempted and made a reformulation of creed in which he reconciled Judaism with the thinking of his own day — the twelfth century. Maimonides' effort rationally and liberally to sustain Judaism had great influence on Christians as well as Jews.

And, true to pattern, this liberal man's liberal efforts met with the fanatical opposition of the separatists, the reactionaries. In Paris and Montpellier, Maimonides' books were publicly burned at the instigation of disapproving Jews who had reported them to the Inquisition as heretical.

That is the background out of which Jewish nationalism was reborn, with the resultant dilemma of nationality versus religion which remains the basic controversy in Judaism today.

5

THE DILEMMA OF NATIONALITY VERSUS RELIGION

WHAT HAPPENED to Jews and Judaism during these long centuries of the Dark Ages was what happened to the world of those days generally. In almost every place they lived, Jews became a kind of caste. But they were not a privileged caste. On the contrary, they were generally underprivileged.

Here and there, a single individual Jew or family was permitted to rise above this restrictive, collectivized, universal system of castes which on the whole, however, submerged all individuals.

Most "Jewish" histories give the entirely distorted impression that only Jews were segregated during these years, and leave the erroneous impression that Jews and Judaism were the principal targets of the rest of a world which was privileged.

It would be foolish to deny that Jews were among the most universally underprivileged caste. But they were not the only people so treated nor was Judaism the only religion that suffered restrictions. Our own American colonies were populated, in the beginning, largely by religious refugees of dissident interpretations of Christianity. And Europe itself, following the ventilating drafts of the Renaissance and Reformation, was fermenting with the earliest spiritual rebels, who began to presage the era of the Rights of Man. Few of

them escaped paying a price for their nonconformity to the stratified societies of feudal Europe.

For, in addition to religious stratification, the medieval life-patterns forced men into castes in other human categories. There were economic castes. And, parenthetically, it may be said here that, while Jews as a whole were denied most of the usual economic opportunities, in that same category they were frequently better off economically than the equally universal caste of serfs. There were also castes of birth and blood.

All this is not to minimize the tragedy of those years for Jews and the stultifying effects of those tragedies on Judaism. But unless some historical perspective is maintained in dealing with the history of these times, a completely inaccurate and misleading picture of Jews and Judaism emerges.

Modern "Jewish" nationalists are not inclined to tell Jews today — and particularly Jewish youth — of this totality of the darkness of the Dark Ages. The result is that "Jewish" separatists today make capital of the persecutions which Jews did suffer. Unsuspecting people are left with the distorted impression that Jews were the only pariahs of the Middle Ages. Out of this murky period of a world that had died and for fifteen centuries struggled for rebirth, this interpretation provides "Jewish" separatists with one of the biggest clubs held over the head of contemporary Jews and Judaism. The world was taught to damn the Jews, these separatists argue, as special targets for fifteen centuries. Ergo, Jews are damned forever.

They act — these "Jewish" nationalists — as if both they and all the rest of mankind were still living in the fifteenth century, and in this light they exploit the tragedy that continues in some countries and among some people.

In this atmosphere the tradition of the "wandering, exiled Jew" was born; of the Jew who suffered because he had no land of "his own." In this period such modern "Jewish" separatist "virtues" originated and crystallized as a separate "Jewish community," "Jewish spokesmen," and "Jewish defense" or "Jewish" polemics.

Most of these things were either actually needed by Jews during this period or were forced on them by those interests that wanted Jews to be as obviously different as it was possible to make them.

But it is one thing to recognize these phenomena as part of a total social pattern against which Western men rebelled with forces that cut across these castes; it is another thing to plod through the dreary history of those centuries with blinders that permit seeing the restrictions on only Jews and Judaism.

The difference in presentation could make all the difference in the world to Jews today — and to Judaism. For herein lies much of the difference between regarding Jews and Judaism as abnormal, eternally martyred, special targets for disabilities, on the one hand, or as a people and a faith whose destinies and character are dependent upon the broad general forces shaping all of society at any particular moment in history.

And from that fundamental difference in approach follows the choice of considering Jews and Judaism on a nationalist plane — defensive, ingrown, finding peace of mind and security only in a modern revival of the caste system on a larger scale in some throwback in time called a "Jewish nation" and a "Jewish State" — or of realizing that even in the blackness of the Middle Ages, Jews and Judaism were inseparably a part of the pattern of the time, and modern Jews and Judaism to be properly considered part of the universal pattern. Those Jews

who choose the second alternative continue to strive for the improvement of all as the only way toward improvement for themselves. If the whole world was against Jews and Judaism for the long centuries of the Middle Ages – just because they were Jews – there is some historic logic in withdrawal and defeatism and segregation that despairs of equality, respect, and dignity and regard for the individual who is a Jew.

But if the antagonism of the world to the Jew and Judaism of the Middle Ages is part of a historic pattern that affected other castes in a generally decadent society, then the lesson of history is something quite different. Instead of ingrown Judaism, it calls for Judaism ever expanding its own liberalism and rising above the caste of "the Jewish people," just as the men who ended the Dark Ages rose above castes. Instead of preoccupation with "Jewish rights," it calls for incessant occupation with "the Rights of Man." Instead of seeking increasing segregation, it calls for increasing integration. Instead of rising concern for a separatism called "the Jewish people," it calls for mounting attention to the universal, moral truths which Jeremiah and Jesus found in the intimacies of the spirit of the individual. Instead of "Jewish" nationalism, in other words, it calls for the prophetic, universal tradition of Judaism.

As a result of the democratic revolutions toward the last quarter of the 18th century, Jews were faced with a climax calling for decision between these alternatives in the countries of Western Europe and in America.

The conduct and aspirations of some Jews during the ghetto period made it clear that segregation of Jews was not always a one-sided proposition. There was always the desire for separatism on the part of some Jews, because they thereby acquired power and control over other Jews. This is the "Jewish

people" idea, as over against the Judaism which, since the period of the Prophets, represented broad, universalistic principles. Universal Judaism permitted people who were Jews by religion to live normally as Jews in any country in which they were free. They accommodated themselves to the national rights, responsibilities, and practices of any society of which they happened to be members, without sacrificing anything of Judaism.

The French and American Revolutions were the most significant events in fifteen centuries for the lives of Jews — and millions of other men. Not since the collapse of the Roman Empire had forces of such universal strength been released.

There is no history of "a Jewish people" for this period, although "Jewish" separatists are always making feeble efforts to construct one.

There is only a history of Western society, which records that those Jews benefited who were fortunate enough to live in countries where the French and American Revolutions had influence. Those Jews who were in Central and Eastern Europe continued to live as they had lived for centuries. There were liberals in France who insisted that the ghetto had to be destroyed, since it involved as much privilege *for* some Jews as it represented discrimination, on the part of people who were not Jews, *against* Jews. These liberal non-Jews realized that, if the ghetto were allowed to exist, it would be an Achilles' heel in the society of which they dreamed — in which all men, regardless of race or creed or birth, were expected, as individuals, to assume equal responsibilities and were privileged to enjoy equal rights.

The truly liberal spirits who envisioned and set in motion the historic process of the libertarian revolutions realized that

the ghetto was not alone a Jewish problem. It was but one manifestation of the entire system of castes which these liberals dreamed of replacing with societies founded on the Rights of Man.

The history of Jews and Judaism in this period should include the contributions of non-Jews like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Christian Wilhelm Dohm, like Mirabeau and Abbé Grégoire. These men fought for equality for Jews simply because they believed in the equality of all men. They believed equality for Jews to be necessary if there were to be free and equal societies for all men. They did Jews, *as Jews,* no favors. They were interested in free societies for themselves.

Here, in its most expansive and exciting formulation, was vindication of the vision of men like Amos, Hosea, and their successors. Others than Jews had been infected with these prophetic doctrines. These liberals were not engaging in a struggle for "Jewish" justice or "Jewish" rights. To these planners of a new kind of world, Jews were like "the Ethiopians," to borrow Amos's iconoclastic deflation of Israelitish chauvinism. The great Prophetic traditions which had been born over twenty centuries before and which stubborn, undiscourageable liberals had kept alive in Judaism and which, through Jesus, had come to so much of the world via Christianity, were now, in turn, to release Jews along with others from a new bondage.

MENDELSSOHN AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Among Jews, the name of Moses Mendelssohn stands out among all others at this time. Mendelssohn was a product of

the ghetto as it had been long established in Germany. He also had a great many personal handicaps to overcome, including terrible physical deformity.

The story of his conquest of these disabilities and his emergence as one of the outstanding figures in these years that presaged the dawn of a new era, is a classic, in miniature, of the pattern that was emerging for large areas of the world.

Mendelssohn first of all set about the task of improving himself; of breaking down, within his own mind and spirit, the ghetto psychology and spirit of surrender that prevailed among many of his coreligionists. He first of all defied the authoritarianism of the ghetto leaders. From that defiance, he moved to demonstrate the stupidity of the authoritarianism outside the ghetto that graded men in standardized castes. Eventually, he became known as an outstanding philosopher in Germany.

He was fortunate that the ruler of Germany, Frederick the Great, in terms of this period was a liberal person who had a great regard for culture and enlightenment. As Mendelssohn made his influence felt in the thinking of Germany – he commented on such works as those of the great philosopher Kant – Frederick the Great began to take cognizance of him. This career, which Mendelssohn began out of a sense of his need and desire for self-improvement, was enhanced in no small degree by recognition which came to him from the outstanding German dramatist of that day, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. So there emerged the great and historic friendship of Mendelssohn and Lessing.

Lessing used his influence and talent to plead for better understanding for Jews and Judaism. He personally facilitated Mendelssohn's career and introduced him to circles in the Germany of that day where Mendelssohn's character and

knowledge might impress others who might, in turn, become protagonists for better understanding.

Lessing's interest in Mendelssohn was more than personal. Their personal relationship brought to Lessing a deep appreciation of Judaism and a realization that beneath the surface of ghetto separatism which Mendelssohn had managed to penetrate, there lay the same great moral values which were the essence of all religion.

About this theme, Lessing wrote *Nathan the Wise,* one of the great historic appeals for the equality of religious belief. Nathan, the central character, is of course Lessing's poeticized tribute to Mendelssohn.

Mendelssohn's most spectacular contribution to breaking the bonds of ghettoism derived from his realization that part of the degradation which Jews suffered in Germany was caused by the fact that because of their cultural isolation in the ghetto, they could not speak German. He believed that the Bible was the truest expression of Judaism; not the Talmudic expansions of the Bible or the rabbinic "fences" which had been established around Judaism's universal truths. Mendelssohn believed that in the elementary, religious, moral values of the Old Testament lay the greatness of Judaism. He therefore translated the Old Testament into German. The translation was intended originally to be only for his own children. He had no intention of publishing it and making it available to other people. But certain Jews who shared Mendelssohn's hopes for an improvement in the status of Jews and for the liberalizing of Judaism — and certain Christians, Lessing among them — prevailed upon Mendelssohn to publish this German translation.

The first great storm then broke. Mendelssohn was im-

mediately attacked by those who wanted to preserve a segregated "Jewish people"; who saw in the ghetto an opportunity for the rabbis, the clerics, and the professional Jews to hold other Jews in the palms of their hands and did not want Jews to achieve national assimilation and cultural integration.

All of these people made Moses Mendelssohn's German translation of the Bible a cause of one of the bitterest conflicts in the whole history of Judaism. In 1779 the rabbis published an edict against the translation. This sentence contains the gist of the edict:

> All true to Judaism are forbidden under penalty of excommunication to use the translation.

The opponents of the translation went on frankly to admit their fear — mark this! — that:

> The Jewish youth would learn the German language from Mendelssohn's translation, more than an understanding of the Torah.

What they feared was the accommodation of Jews to the life in which they were beginning to have the first glimmering hope that someday they might be able to live as equals. Mendelssohn himself, when he saw the storm of protest and the controversy which his translation precipitated, warmed to the fight and issued a statement which might well serve as a model of encouragement to any today who dare to challenge the authoritarians who consider tradition and separatism as ends in themselves. In reply to the rabbis he wrote:

> The more the so-called wise men of the day object to it [the translation], the more necessary it is. At first I intended it only for ordinary people; but now I find that it is much more needful for rabbis.

And of course he was right; because these rabbis were leading the opposition to the process of enlightening Jews.

This is only an episode; but it was the beginning of a movement toward the period of emancipation.

Mendelssohn's personal influence in the emancipation of Jews was considerable. He demonstrated that Jews and Judaism both were capable of greater dignity, service, and participation in the life and times about them than was permitted them by the caste system of the predemocratic world or was favored by the protagonists of caste and segregation among Jews themselves. It has been said that "the inner freedom of the Jews . . . dates from Mendelssohn's translation." That inner freedom was the will of Jews to be free not alone of bonds imposed upon them by the reactionary elements of the rest of the world but the will to be free of their own ghetto-minded bosses. This was the first prerequisite to emancipation.

When this attitude became obvious in other Jews, other Lessings also came forward from among liberal Christians. Subsequent history demonstrated the reciprocal character of emancipation. More and more Jews began, in the manner of Mendelssohn, to rise above the stratification of caste and to take their parts, as individuals, in the formation of a new society in which respect for the individual replaced the uniformity of caste.

In Alsace, a friend of Mendelssohn's, Christian Wilhelm Dohm, took up the struggle for "the Civil Amelioration of the Condition of the Jews."

The quality of Mendelssohn's contribution may perhaps best be evaluated through the words of a contemporary, himself one of the greats in the intellectual traditions of the liberal world — **Immanuel Kant.**

Mendelssohn wrote a magnificent treatise arguing for the separation of church and state. In commenting upon the work, Kant said:

> You have succeeded in combining your religion with such a degree of freedom of conscience as was never imagined possible and of which no other faith can boast. You have, at the same time, so thoroughly and clearly demonstrated the necessity of unlimited liberty of conscience in every religion, that ultimately our church will also be led to reflect how to remove from its midst everything that disturbs and oppresses conscience, which will finally unite all men in their view of the essential points of religion.

Here was the free breath of the Prophetic spirit again. This was the vision of Jeremiah and Isaiah — and of Jesus — cutting through nonessentials and segregation right down to the universalities that were the "holy," the sacred, in all men.

Mendelssohn emancipated Judaism. He taught Jews and Christians that there were no immutable differences inherent in Jews. By demolishing the theory of separatism about Jews and by defining a Judaism of breadth and vision, he opened the way for the participation of Jews in the great democratic revolutions.

REVOLUTION AND EMANCIPATION

The real emancipation of Jews — as of all Western Europe — did not come until the French Revolution and the Rights of Man.

This is not the place to detail a full appreciation of the significance of that event for our modern world. In fact, it is possible that we are still too close to that period in history to appreciate its significance for life today. Sometimes we seem to

take our heritage from this period, which is so inseparably a part of the way we aspire to live, too much for granted. It seems always to require some new threat to our freedom to make the principles of the Rights of Man and our own Bill of Rights seem like something more substantial than a Fourth of July oration.

Here, however, the relationship of this revolution to Judaism is of supreme importance.

One of the things which the French Revolution sought and did establish in principle, though not completely in practice, was the sanctity of the individual, who in a free and democratic state possessed certain inalienable rights of which no one could deprive him.

The French Revolution did not favor Jews to liberalize them. It did not especially select the ghetto to destroy it. It did select and attack the guilds, the nobility, the church; all collectivities which in the medieval world had enjoyed special privileges and which impeded recognition of the revolutionary fact of the sanctity of the individual as the basis for society.

After two years of debate in the first assembly of the First French Republic, in September 1791, a bill was finally introduced in the Chamber of Deputies calling for the emancipation of Jews and their admission into French society as full and equal citizens of the Republic.

The principles upon which Jews were admitted to citizenship in France and to full participation in French society were set down by one of the great liberals of the day, who happened to have been a former French nobleman. He said: *"To the individual Jew, everything; to the Jews as a nation, nothing."* These words need underscoring. They are the basis of the existence of Jews in any democratic society patterned either upon the French Revolution or upon American democracy.

Jews as a separate nation, a nation within a nation, a privileged corporate group, in the midst of a French society which was striving to build upon the rights of individual men — that kind of Jewish life could expect nothing of France and nothing of French democracy. But any Jew who was willing, as an individual, to accept the responsibilities of becoming a part of this society was entitled to all of the rights of any Frenchman of any other faith, or of no faith whatsoever. This included the right to worship God as his individual conscience dictated.

In every ghetto there were Jews who counted the ghetto a blessing. When offered opportunities to emerge from a ghetto or to mitigate some of the worst aspects of ghetto life, they declined. They considered it a privilege to live segregated from the rest of the people, controlling or being controlled by other Jews at will.

These were the protagonists of "the Jewish people" idea. They were afraid that if Jews were free as individuals, and Judaism was elevated above separatism to the universal, Jews and Judaism would both disappear. They held Judaism so cheaply and viewed the history of Jews so single-mindedly as a sequence of exceptional tragedy that, in freedom, they thought Jews would escape.

Such Jews and their lineal descendants today call the formula "To the individual Jew, everything; to the Jews as a nation, nothing" an unfair compact. This, they said, was too high a price to pay for emancipation. It was unfair, they argued, for Jews to be asked to give up what these same separatists call "national distinctiveness" in order to be a part of these new nations.

You see how these "Jewish" nationalists prefer the caste system to the pattern of individual rights. You see how they expect privilege and cry discrimination when the privilege is

denied them. You see how they favor separatism, if they conceive it themselves and resent it when others conceive it for Jews. You see how their concern is "Jewish peoplehood," not Judaism, and why such Judaism as they favor is encrusted with segregating restrictiveness.

There are some who vehemently argue against emancipation even today. Ludwig Lewisohn is one of the most prolific of these segregationalists. He considers emancipation a calamity and liberal Judaism a tragedy. But he is not alone in this nationalist school.

There are also people today who are neither Jews nor anti-Semites, who feel that Jews in the United States should accommodate their lives to the kind of society which exists in the United States and upon which the United States, as a nation, has been founded. These non-Jews are opposed to a separate, corporate life which some Jews seem to want in the United States as a kind of privilege for themselves and which is not enjoyed nor desired by the vast majority of American people.

Assuming that these people have no ulterior purposes; that they apply the principles of individual rights rather than rights based upon a caste system to *all* aspects of American life, they are simply moving in the classical tradition of our Western, libertarian societies. They do not want the United States to be a congeries of separate, romanticized little nationalities, another Balkans. If these people are consistent and not critics of only "Jewish" caste privileges, and if they are genuine opponents of "Jewish" caste discriminations, their opinions must command respectful attention, for it was out of such principles that our democracy was born.

With these democratic revolutions, a reciprocal responsibility was born for Jews, as for all men who were blessed with the new freedom. They were expected to become part and parcel

of the nations into which they were now being welcomed as individual citizens with equal status. Emancipation and democracy have not worked perfectly. There are still areas in which Jews, even in the United States, have not enjoyed all of the rights and privileges of those who are not Jews. We are dealing now with principles which have been in operation only a century and a half, as against a thousand years and more of the kind of society which the democratic revolutions sought to replace. In principle, Jews were expected to become part of those societies on the basis of their individual lives. They were expected, therefore, to slough off the separate nationhood which had been their way of life before the democratic revolutions, whether that separatism had been made by Jews by choice, or whether it had been the design of those who wanted to discriminate against Jews.

There is another important point that requires attention here. "Jewish nationalists," on the one hand, and anti-Semites or reactionaries of other faiths or of no faith, on the other hand, always have found an area of collaboration. Both have wanted to segregate Jews. It was the Jew who wanted to live only as an individual in a democratic society and the liberal Christian who also wanted him to live on that basis, who met somewhere in the middle. Both attempted to break through this ring of segregation which reactionaries, whether Jews or others, were constantly trying to draw around Jews.

Mendelssohn and Lessing and those who followed in their footsteps proved that it was possible to break out of this ring of segregation. The way out, history has shown us, is not a direct, undeviating line. Progress in achieving freedom for Jews follows the line which marks freedom for all men. If it zigs and zags it is because human freedom is, after all, a human

process, unless you believe in the dialectics of Marxist materialism. And it has not yet been demonstrated to the satisfaction of many of us that this materialism spells either freedom or unwavering progress.

What is important in this whole chapter of the libertarian revolutions as it is related to the development of Judaism is that, for those of us who hold to the Western ideals of freedom, these revolutions marked, in spirit, the most universal application of the Prophetic spirit that the world has ever seen.

Men have sometimes confused cause and effect; have credited the spiritual and intellectual progress of the last century and a half to the material advances made by this civilization.

Without minimizing the latter, let it be remembered that the origins of this era go back to the years before billion-dollar corporations, electric power, the airplane, and knowledge of how to split the atom. First there had to be born the free spirit of men which inquired into the mysteries of the universe and explored man's potentialities before fusing the two to bring on such a world as was not dreamed of even by the Wizard of Oz.

And in those earliest days of the civilization we see about us, the spiritual vision of a Mendelssohn and a Lessing was indispensable. In their classic friendship, founded upon respect for the person regardless of faith or race, is the high objective toward which we have hoped all our material wealth would help us move. Mendelssohn lifted Judaism out of the exclusive, restrictive ghettoism in which form it came to him. He contributed to a Judaism which would have a place in the new world; which would help it realize its high, human objective and be a part of the world that did realize that objective, in whole or in part.

It is too bad that, in our frantic effort to live and think by clichés, we have classified our age as a "capitalistic civilization." For, while capitalism was one phenomenon resulting from the world-shaking events of a century and a half ago, it was not the only result and perhaps not even the most important. Free capitalism was only a reflection of the more basic idea of human freedom. Today, we will not save that freedom by saving capitalism. We may save capitalism, if that is our objective, by saving human freedom. And we should be mature enough to know also that, if we save human freedom, it may follow that some other economic reflection of that freedom will evolve for our day.

What is important is that we not lose sight of the basic, distinguishing characteristic of this free way of life which is its principle of the sanctity of individual man. This principle came first. From it follow applications to economic and other problems.

And the maintenance of that basic freedom involves for all men what admission into these free societies involved for Jews a century and a half ago: a reciprocal process; the recognition of oneself *as an individual;* the elimination from thought and action of the inertia left over from the system of castes.

This does not mean that each of us must stand in some kind of lonely isolation. It means that cooperation should be free, voluntary; a joining of hands with other men, who are also individuals, in compacts that transcend race or creed and which are founded on the deeply personal cornerstones of conviction, of likeness of spirit, and mutuality of ideas. Anything less is a relapse to tribalism in which the mumbo-jumbo of a caste of intermediaries tries to run a freedom that men attempt to maintain *in absentia* of mind, spirit, and responsibility.

This goes for capital, labor, government, or religion, and the mumbo-jumbo may come to us through radio or television or from the sanctuary.

Freedom is our birthright only as we are free in spirit and mind and not too weary as a civilization to use our freedom to cross ever-new frontiers of more freedom.

This is what Mendelssohn learned. This was the significance of the Judaism for which he layed the foundations. This is the meaning of the compact with which Jews were accepted as equals into these democratic societies.

If some Jews have forgotten the reciprocal character of that compact "To the individual Jew, everything; to the Jews as a nation, nothing," their neglect is also a reflection of equal forgetfulness on the part of other men. And the proportions of that forgetfulness are not limited to the relationship of Jews and Judaism to modern society. For Jews and men of other faiths have departed equally from the compact in other areas of their lives; forgetting that if they live for and hope to achieve dignity and security as individuals, in freedom, those aspirations call for sloughing off the vestige of the caste systems of predemocratic days. "Jewish" nationalists are wrong. This compact did not ask more of Jews than of other men. In effect, the new world said to all its potential citizens, "To the individual, everything; to men, as members of fragmentized, rigid castes, nothing."

If the new world called upon Jews to examine their lives to see how much they lived as members of a caste and how much as free citizens of these new nations, it did the same to all men, calling for constant examination in all interests of their lives where they hoped for freedom.

A DECLARATION OF INTEGRATION

A public letter, written in 1791 by the outstanding French citizen of Jewish faith at that time, definitely set forth for Jews and Judaism what was required by the new society. The author's name was Isaac Berr. Publication of the letter followed passage of the Edict of Emancipation by the French Chamber of Deputies. The letter is a declaration of independence which every Jew living in a democratic country ought to read, understand, apply to his own personal conduct as a Jew, and call to the attention of others of his coreligionists.

> At length the day has arrived on which the veil is torn asunder which covered us with humiliation. We have at last obtained the rights of which we have been deprived for eighteen centuries. How deeply at this moment should we recognize the wonderful grace of the God of our forefathers! On the 27th day of September we were the only inhabitants of this great realm who seemed doomed to eternal humiliation and slavery; and the very next day, a memorable day which we shall always commemorate, didst Thou inspire these immortal legislators of France to utter one word which caused 60,000 unhappy beings who had hitherto lamented their hard lot, to be suddenly plunged into the intoxicating joys of the present delight. This nation asks no thanks, except that we show ourselves worthy citizens.
>
> . . . Let it be acknowledged, dearest brethren, that we have not deserved this wonderful change by our repentance or by the reformation of our manners. . . .
>
> . . . Let us examine with attention what remains to be done on our part . . . and how we may be able to show in some measure our grateful sense. . . .
>
> The name of active citizen which we have just obtained is without a doubt the most precious title a man can possess in a free empire; but this title alone is not sufficient; we should possess also the necessary qualifications to fulfill the duties annexed to it. We ourselves know how very deficient we are in that re-

spect. . . . We must then, dear brethren, strongly bear this truth in our minds; that, till such a time as we work a change in our manners, in our habits, in short in our whole education, we cannot expect to be placed by the esteem of our fellow citizens in any of those situations in which we can give signal proofs of that glowing patriotism so long cherished in our bosoms.

God forbid that I should mean anything derogatory to our professed religion. . . . If during our tribulation we have derived some consolation from our strict adherence to our religion, how much more are we bound to remain firmly attached to it now! . . . But I cannot too often repeat to you how absolutely necessary it is for us to divest ourselves entirely of the narrow spirit of corporation and congregation, in all civil and political matters not immediately connected with our spiritual laws. In these things we must absolutely appear simply as individuals, as Frenchmen, guided only by a true patriotism and by the general good of the nation.

We must . . . avail ourselves of the resources offered to us by sending our children to share the advantages of national education in public schools. . . . By means of that union in schools our children, like those of our fellow citizens, will remark from their tender youth that neither opinions nor difference of regigion are a bar to fraternal love; and that everyone naturally embracing the religion of his father, all may, in fulfilling their religious duties, fulfill also that of citizenship. . . .

This is a most perceptive analysis of the problem which faces Jews here in the United States today.

This man who stands at the very fork in the road where Jews were given an opportunity to choose between emancipation and segregation makes it very clear he does not mean that Jews are expected to give up their religion. On the contrary, he says, after Jews have suffered so long and have still adhered to their religion, we can all the more observe our religion in a society of freedom.

Compare the vision of this man who saw the public schools

as a possible melting pot which dramatized the idea of the democratic society, to the movements in Jewish life today for parochial schools. Compare this man's idea of individual civic responsibility which Jews are called upon to meet, with the exhortations from professional Jews today for "the *Jewish* community" and "Jewish unity." Compare his profound understanding of the "Rights of Man" with the present-day clamor for "Jewish rights." All these – and more – mark retrogression from the vision of Isaac Berr. All who defy these segregationalist ideas are condemned for taking the road to that horrible end for Jews – "assimilation."

For, under duress of the emotions that were created by the tragedy in Europe during the last war and under the exploitations of a new group of professional Jews who want, more than anything else, to segregate Jews again, Jews today are confronted with a crucial conflict between ghettoization and integration. What is the answer to be?

Will Jews and Judaism suffer a relapse and reverse the process which began with Mendelssohn? Will Jews make themselves a caste and make their Judaism again no more than the shield of their caste? Or, in a world striving for integration and against class and caste stratifications, will Jews and Judaism move to new plateaux of vision for the individual spirit of man? There they might be strengthened by renewed faith in those universal truths which must have fundamental appeal to all men if we are ever to find our way in freedom, rather than through totalitarian coercion to the probably inevitable "one world."

This history of Judaism so far probably indicates, if it indicates anything at all, that there will be some Jews who will elect one way and some who will elect another. For there is

no reason to believe that this conflict between the universal and the exclusive, between man and the mass, between Judaism and the "Jewish peoplehood" theory will be resolved today any more than it was in previous periods of tension. Nor should it be, perhaps.

The whole purpose of this book has been to demonstrate the validity of disunity in Judaism and among Jews — and even its sanctity. For only through its rebellious universalists has Judaism survived to enter upon the stage of the new world to play what part it can in what may well be man's most challenging and important spiritual test.

6

JUDAISM FOR AMERICANS OF JEWISH FAITH

ISAAC BERR's public letter was a fairly detailed but still general blueprint of the alterations required from Jews and Judaism in order to attain equality as individual citizens of the new democracies. Naturally, no such simple exposition could eliminate the thought and action patterns of centuries in either Jews or others. Democracy itself was not a mere formula. It was really no more than an opportunity for a gradual evolution out of the stratifications of life which characterized the Middle Ages. The evolution still goes on — we hope. It suffers setbacks and enjoys advances.

This last chapter in the story of Judaism is simply a partial account of the efforts made by some Jews, who believed in the universalism of the Prophets, to accommodate Judaism to these new societies which, themselves, were so saturated with the idealism of the Prophetic vision.

For, as these new societies offered Jews opportunities for new patterns of life, they also called for reformations in the Judaism that made Jews, Jews.

In the ghetto, Judaism embraced legislation covering the most minute details of life. Jews had been compelled, for the most part, to live as a separate, corporate community within the body politic of the nations in which they resided. Accordingly there evolved exceedingly complicated law codes and

legalistic interpretations of Judaism. Judaism was at once a religion and a legalistic, juridical substitute to fill the vacuum created in the lives of Jews by their exclusion from society.

Democracy, however, offered the opportunity of integrating with the secular life of the people who were not Jews. Secular controls became the prerogatives of the governments under which Jews lived and to which they gave allegiance. And the ideal of the new societies was to offer opportunities for voluntary secular associations between individuals, regardless of race or creed. Jews were to share this national life on a basis of equality with people of other faiths. Therefore, a redefinition — a reformation — in Judaism was necessary. Otherwise, there might arise *secular* conflicts between Judaism and the general culture and society of these new states.

Furthermore, a Judaism which encouraged secular-national separatism would be contrary to the democratic ideal to whatever extent it continued secular association, creating barriers between individual and individual on a basis of creed, in public affairs.

The reformation in Judaism began in Germany. In the course of our own lifetime we found Germany to be a very bad proving ground for any liberal ideas. It was probably also the worst possible proving ground for a liberal development in Judaism. The German people as a group never really felt the liberalizing impact of the democratic revolutions. Interestingly enough, the impetus for the reformation came not from the professional Jews nor from the rabbis who were insistent on holding this community of Jews as a separate group over which they could maintain control. The impetus for reformation came from the Jewish laymen of Germany, who wanted eagerly to become part and parcel of the German

nation. They wanted also to be Jews in a religious sense. They wanted a Judaism which would not impede their integration culturally, socially, and nationally into the life of the German state.

THE REFORMATION IN JUDAISM

Reform Judaism was designed to strip from Judaism those secondary characteristics which served the separatistic idea of "Jewish peoplehood." It was also to emphasize the universalities of the Prophetic tradition. Reform Judaism attempted to strengthen and focalize devotion to those universal, spiritual essentials which were, at once, Isaiah's "holiness" of God and Jeremiah's profoundly intimate "burning fire within." In a religion of such emphasis and proportions, Jews could be Jews without being a "people apart." For, as deeply as members of other faiths, they could find personal, spiritual strength in these truths that bound all men together. Secondary differences of approach through ceremonies and prayers and synagogue rather than church could and did continue to mark the religious distinctiveness of Jews. But since Jews were now to be admitted, as equals, to the peoplehood of the nations of their citizenship, it was no longer essential for Jews to live segregated and restrictive lives outside their synagogues. Such religious practices as were related to their homes were also private, individual matters requiring no privileges in the new states. The broad universality of the truths of Judaism would enable Jews, as individuals, to translate those moralities into secular activities through nonsectarian associations with men of other faiths, motivated by the same moral fundamentals. As Isaac Berr had so brilliantly predicted,

there was no longer need for separate, corporate existence for Jews, outside of their religious associations. They needed no separate schools, no separate political blocs, no segregating language, no isolated secular culture.

Reform Judaism therefore encouraged such simple things as allowing men and women to sit together (that was the pattern in democratic societies), as making it no longer necessary to wear a hat in synagogues, as allowing the introduction of musical instruments for accompaniment of the musical parts of the service, as delivering the sermon in German rather than in Hebrew or Yiddish, following the Mendelssohnian idea of translating the Old Testament.

These were the innovations. Reform eliminated from Judaism paraphernalia which was related to those aspects of life that had become the responsibilities of the state; or which could be met in the equality of secular integration which was the ideal of the new societies. The Judaism that was left was the Judaism of the Prophets, who had defined Judaism as a set of moral and ethical laws. Reform made the Judaism of the Prophets a reality to people who were living in a period of expanding liberal ideas.

The reformation of Judaism in Germany was abortive. Among other things, the clerics and the professional Jews went to the German rulers, who were interested in maintaining a pattern of life closely resembling the system of medieval castes. These people recognized the advantages of leaguing up with the rabbis of Germany for the purpose of restraining liberal ideas. Together, the reactionary rabbis and the reactionary government finally succeeded in stultifying the reformation in Judaism. That was possible in a country where, even to this day, the ideals of Western democracy have had less

support and loyalty and understanding than medieval romanticisms about race and caste. The tragic failure of democracy in Germany, generally, proves that it was no satisfactory laboratory for any democratic movement. The failure of liberal Judaism and emancipation for Jews in Germany proves nothing at all with regard to Jews and Judaism in states with established democratic traditions.

Germany put on many of the cosmetics of the new, liberal states. But it never experienced the profound, moral, and spiritual reformations of the West. It is beyond argument that the sanctity of the individual never achieved in Germany the place of the chief cornerstone that it achieved in Western Europe. Because Germany put on the face of capitalism and of outstanding scientific investigation, many were inclined to identify it as of the same family as the Western democracies. But it was never so. Germany proves how wrong it is to identify our way of life as "capitalism," ignoring the fundamental, spiritual reformation which all of Germany failed to create. And in such a Germany, Jews attempting to become part of this superficial imitating of the West and failing to create for Judaism the kind of fundamental spiritual reformation which all of Germany failed to create, sought a second-best alternative in complete assimilation. When a reformation of Judaism surrendered to the essential caste thinking of rabbis and Prussian overlords, individual Jews attempted to bridge the gap between medieval Judaism and a superficially modernized Germany by leaving Judaism altogether.

That device was foredoomed to failure by the very forces that had compelled its adoption as an alternative to inner reformation. For it was an almost historic certainty that in such a Germany there would arise a Hitler who would reach back

into the unventilated recesses of Germanic romanticism and exalt again the medieval caste of race, undercutting individual freedom even when it was exercised by Jews in the escapist pattern of complete assimilation.

In the United States, on the other hand, the democratic, libertarian principles produced their most promising results. It was natural therefore that the reformation of Judaism should attain its greatest success in the climate of American freedom and liberty.

The impetus for the reformation in the United States came from the abortive effort in Germany. Jews of German origin who came here about the middle of the 19th century, following the failure of the midcentury revolutions in their former homeland, were the initiators.

The man most prominently identified with the American reformation was Isaac Mayer Wise, a rabbi who came to the United States from Bohemia in the second quarter of the 19th century.

Wise saw American democracy as the fulfilment, in practice, of the Prophetic principles which, to him, were the important elements in Judaism. In 1854 he said:

> Moses formed one pole, and the American Revolution the other, of an axis around which revolved the political history of 33 centuries.

America, he considered the "universal republic." Eventually, he was sure this nation must point the way to a similar organization of society all over the world. And Judaism, he held, was the "universal religion." "In its pure and denationalized form," he believed all the religions of men must come to the basic truths of Judaism.

Once he said:

> Only that portion of Judaism which will and must become the common good of all men, is religion to us, and only in this respect are we Jews; all other laws, ordinances, customs, and usages wherever or whenever written or practiced have a secondary importance to us. . . .

"Legalism is not Judaism nor is mysticism religion. . . ." he added.

Here was the Prophetic tradition again lashing out at the priest. Here was concern with religious truths and no regard for separatism and tribalism.

This was Amos, again saying, *"Are ye not as the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel."*

And, like Amos, Isaac Mayer Wise brought down upon his head the wrath of the legalists, the segregators, the users of Judaism as if it were nothing more than a set of tribal practices to hold together a separate and distinct entity called "the Jewish people."

In 1870 he expressed this idea in a comment about Paul of Tarsus:

> Paul conceived the idea of carrying into effect what all the prophets, and all the pious Israelites of all ages hoped and expected, the denationalization of the Hebrew ideal and its promulgation in the form of universal religion among the Gentiles, so that the whole human family might be united beneath the banner inscribed with the motto: "One God and one humanity."

Such breadth for Judaism was not taken quietly by those who preferred their Judaism in the straightjacket of form and ceremony, bearing the distinctive label "For the Jewish people only." The forces of reaction called up the ghosts of those who had opposed Amos. "Go prophesy in Judah." "Exile

him from the community," they screamed at Wise. "Remove him from the pulpit."

> I cannot, I will not retire [he said]. I shall not suffer it when on the one side the religion of my fathers, the sacred heritage of Israel, Jeshurun's precious boon is attacked by apostates, bigots, hypocrites, materialists, atheists, self-styled philosophers and unprincipled clamorers, and none appears to have the nerve to confront them, armed with truth and careless of consequences.

These principles and ideas, Wise preached – and *practiced* – first in Albany, New York. There he had a bitter battle with those who wanted to continue the segregated, ghettoized kind of Judaism they had known in Europe.

Finally he went to Cincinnati where, in a community of Jews who had themselves migrated largely from Germany, he planted the roots of the movement which came to be known as Reform Judaism in the United States.

Wise's essential ideas were eventually expressed, in succinct form, in a document known as The Pittsburgh Platform. This declaration was drafted in 1885 at a conference of the earliest Reform rabbis who, in a number of congregations throughout the country, were advancing the ideas Wise had first articulated. Wise was the oldest and most influential of the group. This Platform became the classical formulation for American Reform Judaism. For more than half a century it pointed the direction in which this reformation moved, until it was again halted by a recrudescence of "Jewish" nationalism and separatism.

One of the planks in that platform is the kernel of the whole matter, though it is by no means a complete definition of the things Isaac Mayer Wise hoped Reform Judaism would accomplish. The Pittsburgh Platform, speaking definitively of Jews, says:

> We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine nor a sacrificial worship under the administration of the Sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish State.

Isaac Mayer Wise and his contemporaries were very great men in the history of religious thought. Much has been said and written about the men who fashioned the Reformation in Christianity. It is rather regrettable that Jews in the United States have never really appreciated the enormous intellectual and spiritual battle that Jewish reformists made to bring about a comparable and, in many ways, a much more difficult reformation in Judaism. They recognized, as the center of the whole problem, this conflict between the Prophetic or universal interpretation of Judaism and the hankering of some to maintain the hard core of a nationalistic content in the lives of Jews and to use Judaism to serve that purpose.

There is a rather interesting passage in the writings of Isaac Mayer Wise which will bear out this interpretation. He was fully aware of the very distressing situation in which, almost continually, the Jews of Eastern Europe found themselves.

"Jewish" nationalists had begun, by the time of Wise, to organize the Zionist movement. Since, according to them, Jews were a nation, that nation must have a State. To bolster their argument, these Zionists made two basic claims which were somewhat self-contradictory. In the first place, they held that the only solution for Jews in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe was emigration to a "Jewish" state. In these countries, Jews were considered a separate nation and so could never achieve equality or security, according to Zion-

ist logic. But in those countries where the impact of the liberal revolutions had been felt and where Jews were offered opportunity for equality as *individuals,* although no guarantees were made for the integrity of "the Jewish nation" or "the Jewish people," Zionists advanced a quite opposite reason. In these countries they feared too much equality. The "Jewish" nation, they predicted, would disappear unless Jews could be unified, as a national group, tied by national ties to a "Jewish" national state.

In commenting upon these nationalistic Zionist efforts, which usually masqueraded then — as today — as humanitarian and philanthropic, Isaac Mayer Wise said this:

> All these benevolent gentlemen, we have no doubt, mean well and are perfectly earnest in their philanthropic projects. The practicability of those projects seems to be quite doubtful in our minds. . . . The final redemption of Israel can be brought about only by the final redemption of the Gentiles. . . . What we want to impress first and foremost on the noble philanthropists is that we want no new nationality created, and no old one restored, no sectionalism and no particularism in any temporal affairs. We want the equality and solidarity of mankind.

On another occasion, Wise blasted the Zionist idea of nation and national religion with these words:

> The false Messiahs who appeared from time to time among the dispersed and suffering remnants of Judah, had no religious purpose in view; all of them were political demagogs or patriotic fantasts with as much religious zeal as was deemed requisite to agitate the Jewish mind and to win the goodwill of the masses and its leaders for the proposed political end, which was the restoration of the Jewish nationality and the conquest of Palestine. All of them failed miserably and left behind them plenty of misery for their thoughtless followers. And yet with that

> warning of history before them, the party of men called Zionists and the admirers of Dr. Herzl's "Judenstaat" propose to do the same thing over in our days. . . . We cannot afford to let it go out into the world that we are in sympathy with a cause which we know will ultimately result in harm to the Jews even in this country. Already many of the journals of this land are making capital out of this thing, and it becomes us to put a stop to this movement, at least so far as we Americans are concerned, right in its incipiency. We denounce the whole question of a Jewish State as foreign to the spirit of the modern Jew of this land, who looks upon America as his Palestine and whose interests are centered here.

This is the essence of the Judaism which was born in the United States as a religious, spiritual reflection of the opportunity for freedom from the caste of "Jewish peoplehood" with which Jews were presented in democratic emancipation.

REEMERGENCE OF JEWISH NATIONALISM

In the past 25 years there has been a reversal in American Judaism. Had Reform Judaism continued the pattern set by Isaac Mayer Wise, it would have led the way to a complete accommodation of people of the Jewish faith and of Judaism to the American scene.

Speaking in rather long sweeps of history, if Jews had become part and parcel of the American people as individuals, rather than collectivized members of the "Jewish people" in the midst of the "American people," there would have been no occasion to debate whether Jews are a race, people, religion, or what not. But the progress of Reform Judaism was interrupted and is now turning back on itself. It has been captured by, or its leaders have surrendered to, a new rise of "Jewish

nationalism" which today poses the greatest threat to the security of Jews in their history.

It promises to revive again — even in America — the nationalistic concept of Judaism and to replace the Prophetic universalism which Isaac Mayer Wise and his contemporaries strove so valiantly to organize and articulate. The Reform Judaism which Wise conceived and which turned its back upon the medieval notion of a "Jewish" nation now indulges prayers for Israeli Independence Day, teaches Zionism in its religious-school textbooks, and advises that such ceremonial Hebrew as is still retained in its prayers follow the Israeli pronunciation.

The story of the segregation of Jews is not so simple as that which is commonly presented by professional Jews. As often as there were forces that wanted to segregate Jews, there were forces in the lives of Jews themselves eager for that segregation. The backward drift in American Judaism and among American Jews during the last twenty-odd years is largely attributable to the fact that, once again, such Jewish segregationalists acquired the whiphand. As has happened so often in history, freedom and liberty of liberals was jeopardized by the lack of vigilance and zeal among the liberals themselves.

The impact that Hitler's racist theories had upon the thinking of people, in the days when many were saying, *"He must be right because he is so successful,"* should not be minimized for a moment. I am as aware of the transplantation of some of that thinking into American life as anyone else.

This tragic acceptance of Hitler's racist twaddle had its effect upon Jews, too. Dyed-in-the-wool "Jewish" nationalists had a field day. They said, almost exultantly, "You see how foolish it is to believe in emancipation and all the liberal ideals

for Jews. For Germany," they argued, "was one of the most enlightened nations of the world and look what happened to Jews there."

And the shattering impact of the tragedy mounted as Hitler paralyzed and stultified most other Jews. They did not stop to think that Germany was not really such a liberal state; that it had been unable to sustain a democratic form of government for *anyone* — not only Jews — at a time of crisis. They did not stop to realize that the terror which Hitler had unleashed had engulfed practically the entire civilized world. They did not ask into the antecedents of those "Jewish" segregationalists who used the world tragedy to advance a political-national idea that had existed long before the world ever heard of Hitler.

They did not realize that in this numbing horror they were surrendering the Prophetic tradition to the priestly caste. They did not remember that, a century and a half ago, Jews had first broken out of the iron ring of medievalism because of the most universal application of the Prophetic truths that the world had ever seen. And, remembering so little with their heads and dominated so much by their hearts, Jews either followed the Zionist leaders or were passive and quiet before them.

One of the consequences of the Hitler period was this tendency — and in Europe it became more than a tendency — to segregate Jews. In the United States it infiltrated into the thinking and became the publicly spoken philosophy of a certain element of professional Jews who saw an opportunity to fasten the old reactionary pattern upon the masses of Jews. They did not try to meet the backwash of Hitlerism in the United States with some extension of democracy in the lives

of Jews. They did not attempt to encourage Jews to believe in the democratic processes of the United States, however imperfect they may be.

Rather, they accepted the hopelessness for Jews that was easily deduced from the Hitler success. They accepted Hitler's decree of separatism and tried to make of it a virtue and to use it as political capital to win a "Jewish" state.

But the way to vanquish the enemies of democracy is to combat the theories which such enemies practice. The way to beat the forces which are attempting to destroy democracy is to find new ways of strengthening, improving, and extending democracy.

ZIONIST STRATEGY

Zionism rejected many opportunities to resolve in ways other than through the establishment of a so-called "Jewish" state, the refugee problem that followed the war. What Zionists wanted was a "Jewish State," not a humanitarian solution of a specific human problem.

The "Jewish State" was necessary as an integral part of Zionism's "Jewish nationalism." The State of Israel was necessary to the survival of Zionism. It was not necessary to the solution of the refugee problem or to the survival of Judaism.

Several rather startling revelations, which were made only after the Zionists managed to pull this political *fait accompli* by partitioning Palestine, reveal the true character of the Zionist movement; brand it for the modern expression of anti-Prophetic traditions that it really is, and prove that it was never conceived as only a humanitarian program to assist

Jews who lacked democratic opportunities. As Zionism continues to influence Jews, Judaism, and American foreign policy, even after the State of Israel is established, it becomes increasingly important that it be recognized for what it is: a segregating, separatist philosophy and program. It has its separatist influences in American life, generally. It also has its restrictive, segregating influence on Jews and Judaism.

This is a quotation from one of the outstanding theoreticians of the movement. It was published only after the State of Israel was established. Joseph Heller, author of *The Zionist Idea,* writes:

> As long as the colonization of Palestine was still in its beginnings and Zionism was faced with tremendous initial difficulties, the leaders of the movement considered it *inopportune officially* to proclaim the re-establishment of the Jewish State as the ultimate political end of Zionism. [My italics.]

In other words, do not tell the people what your objectives really are, as long as you can persuade them to go along with you and support the things that *you* know you are trying to accomplish, even though *they* think you are doing something quite different.

Another statement came from an elder statesman of the Zionist movement, Chaim Weizmann, the President of the State of Israel. His book of memoirs was not published until after the State of Israel was established. In it there are a number of extremely candid revelations.

In the 1930's Weizmann came to the United States, where at that time the great bulk of Jews were anti-Zionist and opposed to the idea of a "Jewish nationality." Weizmann told them that of course Zionism was not really a nationalist movement. All Zionism is trying to do, he assured Americans, is

to build up a cultural center in Palestine and to take out from Eastern Europe the unfortunate people who have nowhere else to go. Weizmann financed the bankrupt "Jewish nationalist" movement with money which he obtained from people who were *opposed* to "Jewish nationalism." He obtained the money by assuring these people that they were contributing only to a philanthropy.

Thirty years later, here is what Weizmann himself says of those years in his memoirs, *Trial and Error:*

> Those wealthy Jews who could not wholly divorce themselves from a feeling of responsibility toward their people, but at the same time could not identify themselves with the hopes of the masses, were prepared with a sort of left-handed generosity, *on condition that their right hand did not know what their left hand was doing. To them, the university-to-be in Jerusalem was philanthropy, which did not compromise them; to us it was nationalist renaissance. They would give — with disclaimers; we would accept — with reservations.* [My italics.]

Many Americans of other faiths who have been moved by the tragedy of Jews in Europe have supported Zionism, believing it was a liberal movement.

Now, if they will but read, they will see that men like Weizmann deliberately put a front of liberal humanitarianism and culture on a movement that is fundamentally related to the medieval idea that Jews are an unassimilable "people"; that Judaism is the peculiar, tribal faith of that "people," and that the democratic principles can never really operate well enough in human life to include Jews.

This is what supporters of Zionism really support, though most of them do not know it.

This is the kind of political maneuvering which has come to

be accepted as a substitute for Judaism in the United States today. By this kind of deception, under the masquerade of philanthropy for Jews who were in need and who had been victimized by Hitler, American Jews are again saddled with "Jewish nationalism."

BLUEPRINT OF SEGREGATION

But, you may say, the State of Israel is established and all of that is over with now. Just because you might say that, this book would be incomplete without some brief analysis of the design that still threatens further extension of Judaism's Prophetic tradition in the United States today. Will American Jews go on, adding to the tradition of Isaac Mayer Wise and completing the reformation he started? Or, having given their hearts, unthinkingly, to the leaders of "Jewish" nationalism while Hitler was in power, will American Jews now give their heads and basic convictions, too?

The State of Israel was never the end purpose of Zionism. The State of Israel is only an incident in the history of Zionism, the purpose of which is to nationalize the lives of all Jews. Having achieved this state now, the leaders of "Jewish nationalism" are turning their attention to Jews in the United States, as the largest community of Jews in the world. They hope to make American Jews members of a national minority group, a segregated bloc, marked out by a separate culture, with separate responsibilities to this so-called Jewish State.

Faced with this plan, there is a crying need for a reaffirmation of the basic principles of Isaac Mayer Wise and of the truth that Jews are not a separate minority-national bloc but individual citizens of the United States, of Jewish faith. The

formulation of a program upon the basis of this principle is absolutely indispensable for the normal living of people of Jewish faith in the United States.

Unless Americans of Jewish faith and a great many Americans of other faiths who have been misguided into supporting Zionism return to the fundamentals both of American life and of Judaism, we are headed for something of a catastrophe. One fundamental of American life is that our society is not a conglomeration of separate nationalities. This is a society of individuals who have come here from many nations and who have assumed the obligation of becoming part and parcel of the American nation on the basis of individual rights and individual responsibilities. Zionists do not want this. Zionists want Jews here to be a separate national minority group.

The whole modern form of this ancient struggle within the traditions of Judaism may be summarized, though by no means exhausted, with a few definitive statements by one of the leading Zionists in the United States. He is Baruch Zuckerman, the president of the Labor Zionist Organization, one of the outstanding Zionist groups.

He admits that Zionism is a program of abnormality for America and that eventually the only solution for Jews who follow the Zionist pattern is to get out of the United States and go to the State of Israel. He admits that until they do that, and until the State of Israel is prepared to accept them, they must *demand privileges* of the American people in order to be able to live here as a group segregated from the culture and the social responsibilities which come to American citizens.

"Honest and right-minded people," he says, "must be made to understand clearly the special nature of the conditions in which we Jews find ourselves and the special duties which

these conditions impose upon us. They will understand. The permanent answer to our abnormality must be found in Kibbutz Galuyot." (Which means the "ingathering of the exiles" — the movement to bring to Israel all Jews who are in "exile" — in *Galut,* which is the Zionist term used for all Jews who do not live in Israel.)

Then Zuckerman says that Jews are entitled to live here as a segregated group, with a different culture, expanding their own separate national characteristics. They can demand the right to what he calls "cultural pluralism." In other words, he contends that the United States is not really a society of pluralistic cultures. It has one culture, which is an American culture; at least it is moving in that direction, but Jews can demand the privilege of living with a separatist culture in this society which is trying to develop its own culture, characteristic of its own life, because, after all, Jews are not going to live here very long anyhow. He says:

> A normal people, therefore, has but one culture. The individual member of such culture does not need cultural pluralism. We, however, do not enjoy a normal life. A permanent solution to our abnormality must be that we become normal. We can do that only through Kibbutz Galuyot, through a return to Israel.

He goes on to say this:

> Those non-Jews who will understand all of this will also agree to the privileges to which we have a right [if you can, make sense out of that statement!]. I use the term privileges advisedly; for some may here invoke against us a comparison with other national minorities which submit more easily to assimilation and are drawn into not only the civil, but also the spiritual life of the dominant culture in America and gradually surrender their individuality.

This is what Zionism has in store for people of Jewish faith in the United States.

But this is obviously a question involving more than Jews. It involves also Americans of other faiths. How will they look upon some 5,000,000 of their fellow citizens who happen to be Jews? Will they support this separatist philosophy that asks for privileges, as if they were a right? Will they stand passively by or actively support the creation in America of a neoghettoism and so strengthen in America the vestiges of reaction and medievalism that still hanker after castes and resist the extension of the principle of individual rights?

Or, with the liberals who conceived and fought for the great libertarian ideals a century and a half ago, will they stand with those Jews who today, as throughout all of this history, remained steadfastly true to the universalism that was equally valid as a tradition among Jews and in Judaism?

If they elect this alternative, there is a counterpart to Zionism today among Americans of Jewish faith. It is found in an organization called *The American Council for Judaism.* This book was not intended to be a history of the American Council for Judaism but, at this writing, the history of the liberal, Prophetic, universal spirit of Judaism and the organized voice of those Americans of Jewish faith who reject completely and emphatically every facet of "Jewish" nationalism or of a nationalized Judaism, focuses in this organization. It therefore deserves at least a brief mention as the latest — though assuredly not the last — chapter of this record.

The American Council for Judaism stands on two basic unassailable principles.

One is the Judaism of the Prophets. There is spiritual content enough in Judaism, with validity and meaning for human

beings, without all of the paraphernalia of the clerics and the professionals. The American Council for Judaism stands for a universal Judaism and means the essence of the Prophetic idea. Judaism is to do justice and to have mercy and to walk humbly with God; and all the rest is commentary and of secondary importance.

The second basic principle of the Council — and it does *not* conflict in a country in which church and state are separate — is that Jews are individual citizens of the United States of America; that as such they are entitled not to the privileges about which Zionism talks but to equality of rights and equality of responsibilities. Jews are not a separate, secular group. They are individuals worshiping in accordance with the dictates of their consciences. In that and all other interests, Jews ask only for those rights and are eager to accept those responsibilities which, in the equality of American citizenship, come to all of our fellow countrymen.

References for CHAPTER I

ALBRIGHT, W. F., *From the Stone Age to Christianity.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1942.

FRAZER, JAMES G., *The Golden Bough.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942.

FRAZER, JAMES G., *Folklore in the Old Testament.* London: Oxford University Press, 1907.

MEEK, T. J., *Hebrew Origins.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950.

OESTERLY AND ROBINSON, *History of Israel.* London: Oxford University Press, 1932.

References for CHAPTER II

ALBRIGHT, W. F., *Archeology and the Religion of Israel.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1942.

BURROWS, MILLAR, *Outline of Biblical Theology.* Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1946.

FRAZER, JAMES G., *Folklore in the Old Testament.* London: Oxford University Press, 1907.

MEEK, T. J., *Hebrew Origins.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950.

MORGENSTERN, JULIAN, *The Oldest Document of the Hexateuch.* Cincinnati, Ohio: Hebrew Union College.

References for CHAPTER III

BUTTENWEISER, M., *The Prophets of Israel.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914.

SCOTT, R. B. Y., *The Relevance of the Prophets.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944.

References for CHAPTER IV

BARON, SALO W., *A Social and Religious History of the Jews.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1937.

ENELOW, H. G., *A Jewish View of Jesus.* New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1930.

MOORE, G. F., *History of Religions.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927.

References for CHAPTER V

GRAETZ, H., *History of the Jews.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1895.

WALTER, H., *Moses Mendelssohn.* New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1930.

BARON, SALO W., *A Social and Religious History of the Jews.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1937.

References for CHAPTER VI

WILANSKY, D., *Sinai to Cincinnati.* New York: Renaissance Book Company, 1937.

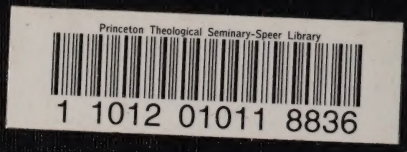
WEIZMANN, C., *Trial and Error.* New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949.

HELLER, J., *The Zionist Idea.* New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1949.

RALL, H. F., and S. S. COHON, *Judaism and Christianity Compare Notes.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927.

Date Due

[illegible]			
FE 16 '53			
MY 7 '54			
JAN 28 '57			
[illegible]			
JAN 19 '61			
FEB 15 '61			
[illegible]			
[illegible]			
[illegible]


Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01011 8836